sketch

#43

COMIC BOOK ART TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

TOM
BIERBAUM
Protect Yourself

MEGHAN
HETRICK
Drawing Lady Death

ANDREW
GETTLER
Illustrating

WALDEN
WONG
Inks

THE ART OF
JIM LEE

Sketch Magazine #43 $6.95

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Comic books are a **fun medium**! Blue Line Arts' goals are aimed toward enhancing this art form - and others – through knowledge and quality art supplies. We try hard to make certain that you, the reader, have the comic book technique information you require for your personal enjoyment of this great field.

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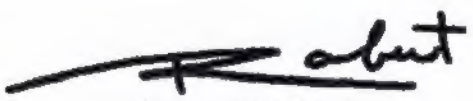
A note from Robert...

So many things going on around the Sketch offices. What to disucss first... this issue features one of my favorite all time favorties: artist, writers, publisher Jim Lee. His ideas and views are incredible windows into the creation of comics. Tom Bierbaum continues with his encouraging words for all creators. Bill Nichols has brought several new faces to the pages of Sketch. Do you have something to share? A step-by-step? A tutorial on creating comics? Something I'm very proud of and look forward to sharing with everyone is ComicMentor.com. ComicMentor.com is the next stage in learning, sharing and communicating with all types of comic creators, from the established professional to the newest artist who just picked up a pencil today. More to come soon.

Keep Creating . . . Keep Sketching



Robert W. Hickey
Publisher

Words from Bill...

Most of us, as one year closes and another begins, take time to reflect on what's happened in the past twelve months and look ahead to the next twelve. We revise our plans, set new goals, do things and at the end of the year, go through the process again. And that's okay as long we don't give in and give up.

If you've read my Comics Mentor blog posts, you know that I keep reminding myself of the lessons I need to learn. What is it I need to hear that day? What can I learn? If others read those posts and find some nugget of self-wisdom that helps them, then that's a bonus. I'm not going to tell you how to live your life, but I hope you might be inspired to learn your own lessons and share the results.

Keep moving forward in your life. Keep creating new works and opportunities. Team up with other creators when you can. Inspire others to do the same. Share your knowledge. Don't give in. Don't' give up.

That's me telling myself those things. Do you see anything in there you need to hear as well?

Bonus!

Happy (New) Year.

Bill Nichols
Senior Editor

J'MLEE

There are titans in the field of comic book art. There are titans in the business and publishing end of comics. It is quite an accomplishment to rise to the top in either field. Jim Lee is both the co-publisher of DC Comics and consistently one of the most in- demand artistic talents of the last twenty-five years. Few can rival his ability and drive, yet he remains one of the nicest pros a fan can ask to meet. Known for amazing detail and dynamic figures, Jim still stresses the basic skills that underly his amazing art.

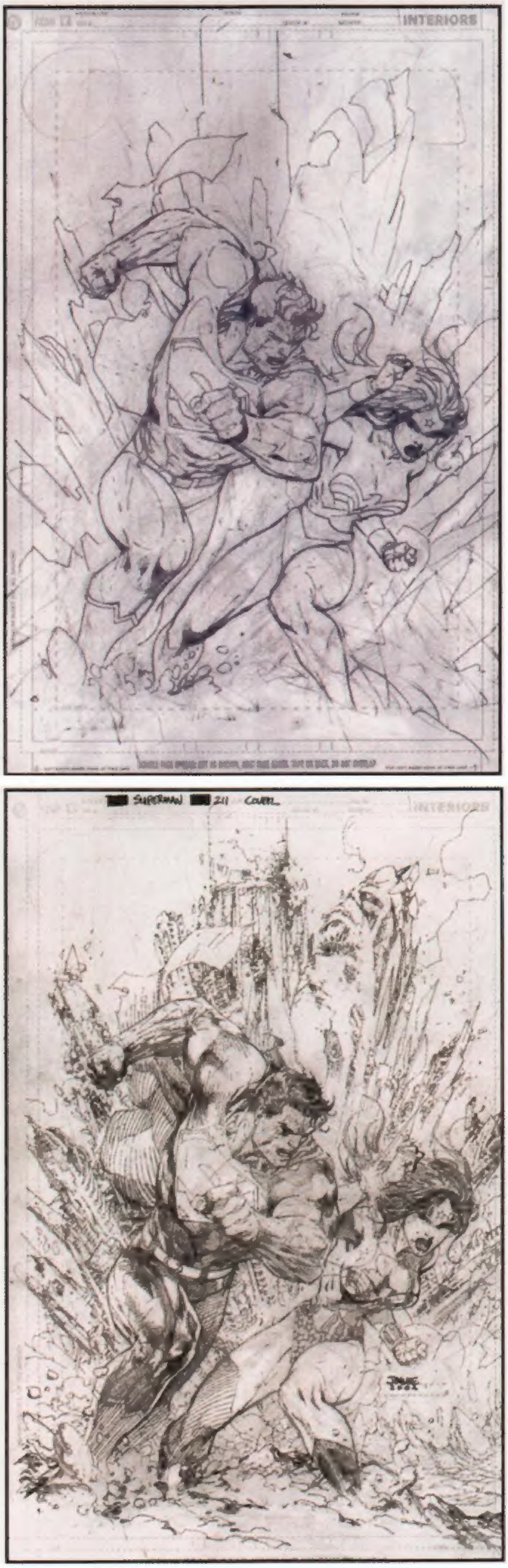
Jim on Drawing

When you draw it really takes you to another place and time. You think you spent an hour drawing something and then find out it's been five hours. When I go to a convention I start drawing for the the fans and before I know it the convention is over. When you have a fan in front of you it's a way of communicating without talking. You are drawing for them, they are seeing your thoughts on paper. It's cool to be able to share that.

Jim on Dynamic Figures

The secret to drawing dynamic figures is to move the torso as far away from the pelvis as possible without making the figure look frightening. With the torso and pelvis right on top of each other the figure is static, just standing there. As they start moving apart, that is when characters start falling off balance. As you move the center of balance of the torso and pelvis off-balance you can create more dynamic poses. The torso is fairly rigid, so no matter what kind of pose you have you are always going to have the same basic shape.

The trick to drawing convincingly is convert the 2-D drawing into the illusion of something that is 3-D. The way to do that is by breaking the plane. By tilting the wrist back in a simple drawing of a hand you begin to gain depth. Foreshortening creates the illusion that a bent arm is going back into space. For every action their is a reaction. If one arm is throwing a punch the other arm needs to be pulled back to create balance, an opposite re-action. When I draw these things I try to visualize them in three dimensions and sort of move the camera around. Spotting blacks properly helps with the illusion of foreshortening.



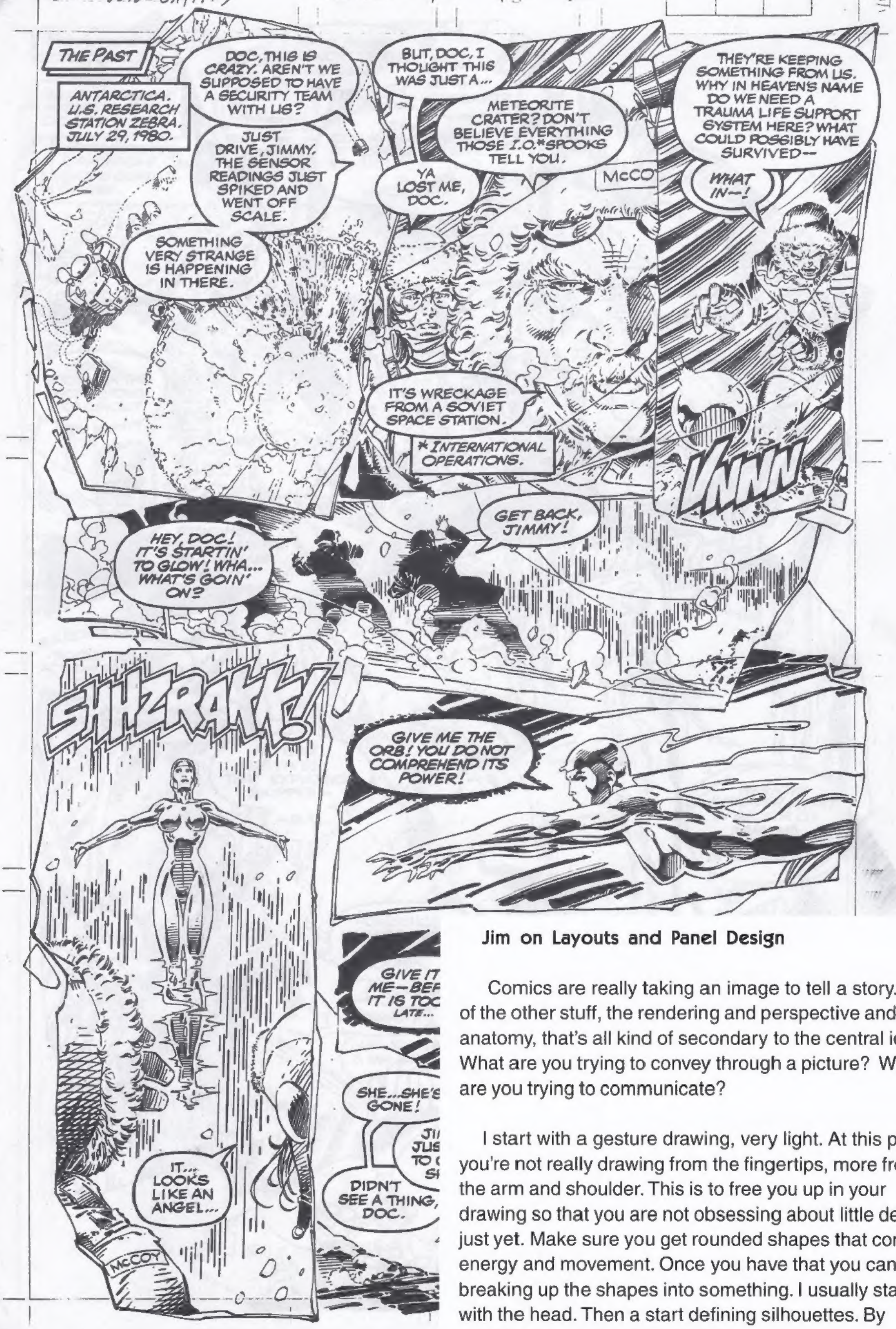
We are biologically designed to look at peoples heads for facials clues. When we look at a page our eyes are drawn to the face. After layouts, this is what I draw first and what I spend the most amount of time drawing. The head determines the proportions of the rest of the body. I'm constantly thinking about what part of the body I'm drawing and how that part relates to the rest of the parts I've already drawn, how they fit in perspective to one another, the reference points...elbows ,hips, shoulders... are all aligned the same distance. It's fairly mathematical but at the same time you have to put some personality, some spark, into the drawing. Otherwise it looks very stiff and uninteresting. I work fairly quickly, fairly loosely so that I don't feel any regret when I erase things.

Jim on Shadows

When you are drawing hair on someone you don't want to draw every single hair. Not only does it take too much time, it looks flat. What you want to do is draw the shadow of clumps of hair. Tufts of hair can look almost like leaves, layered on top of one another. Even when I draw a nose I'm not really drawing a nose, just a nostril and the shadow of the other nostril against the upper lip. I draw an upper lip and then the shadow of that lip on the chin. I draw the chin and then the shadow of that chin on the neck. A lot can be accomplished with shadows.

Jim on Drawing Clothes

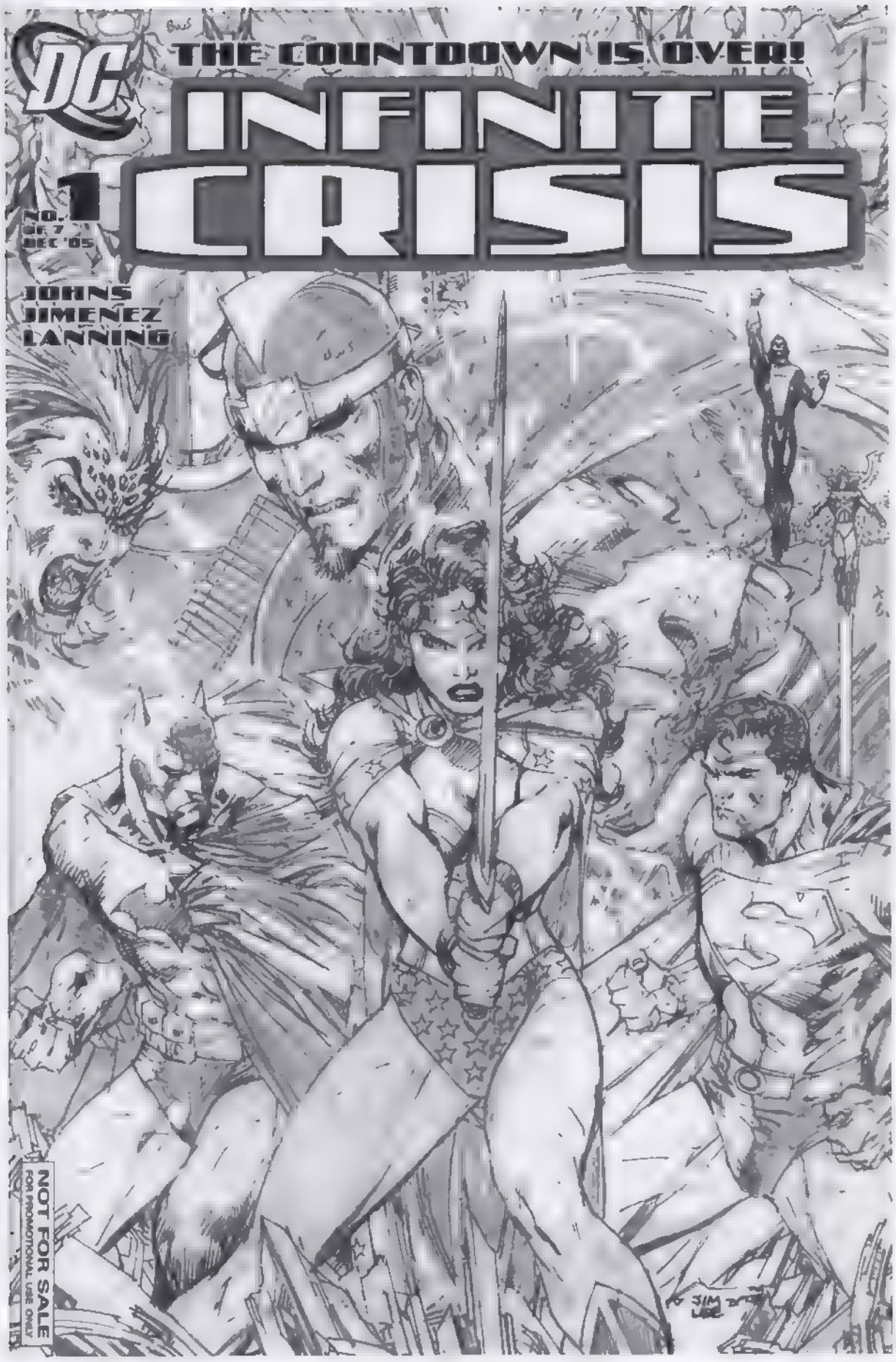
Just look at the drapes in your window. The folds in the drapes flow from the highest point where the drapes are hung. For clothing, just figure out the point of tension on the body and allow the folds in the clothing to follow that point.



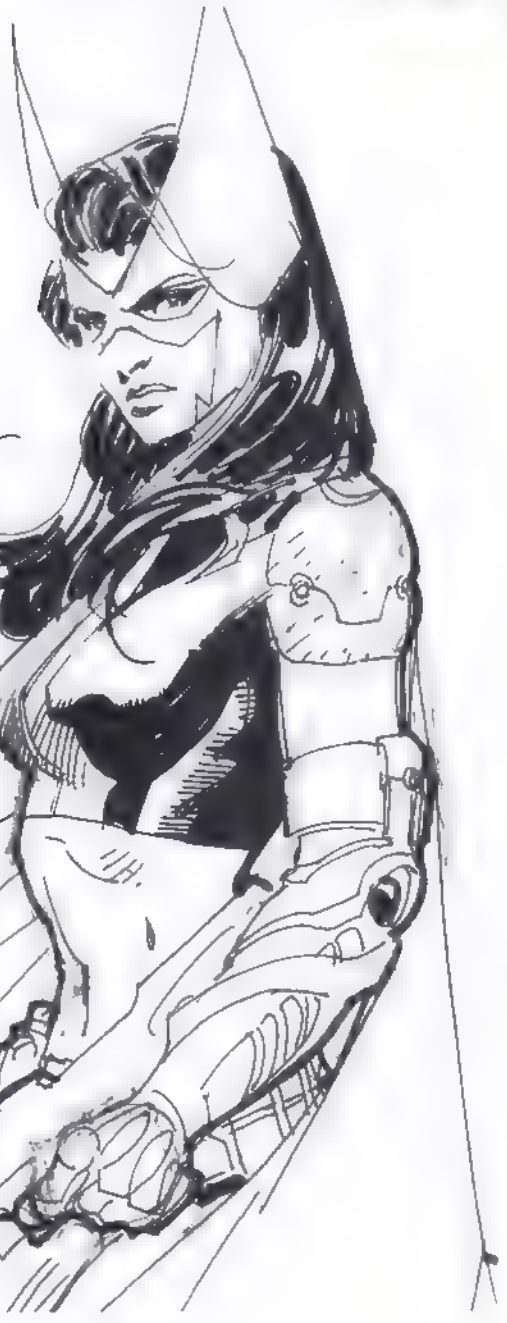
Jim on Layouts and Panel Design

Comics are really taking an image to tell a story. All of the other stuff, the rendering and perspective and anatomy, that's all kind of secondary to the central idea. What are you trying to convey through a picture? What are you trying to communicate?

I start with a gesture drawing, very light. At this point you're not really drawing from the fingertips, more from the arm and shoulder. This is to free you up in your drawing so that you are not obsessing about little details just yet. Make sure you get rounded shapes that convey energy and movement. Once you have that you can start breaking up the shapes into something. I usually start with the head. Then a start defining silhouettes. By combining round and straight shapes I can construct an



arm that combines a realistic look with a dynamic one. As a penciller I often use a .4mm lead for a mechanical pencil. This is a Japanese import lead and not always easy to find in the States. What's great about .4 is that it gives you a thinner line that .5 does but .3 is super-fine and breaks a lot under pressure. It's nice to have a crisp line that doesn't break under pressure. After I finish rough layouts I lightly erase the pencils lines to the point that they are mostly gone but I can still faintly see them. I honestly think it is their just to give me some confidence, that I'm working with a safety net underneath. I could draw everything straight without all the underdrawing, but it would be very nerve wracking. Now I know that if I fall I still have something to fall back on. I can erase yet still go back to my initial structure underneath it all and know that my forms are all still relatively correct and that I have composed it using negative space, overlap for depth and other considerations. This is the kind of thing I never did as a kid because I had no discipline and thought I knew better than any grown up. I though a could start drawing here and finish up there. I was wrong. For anyone doing art, learn to do this. This really is the work. After this is where a start worrying about technique, making sure my proportions are correct and that my lines are on the right plane. I use a combination of thick and thin lines to create more movement in the art. When I draw at home I draw and erase, draw and erase till I am happy with the result. Turning over the paper and looking at your drawing against a light source, kinda backwards, can reveal any weakness in the figure layout. I constantly do that while I am drawing.



Jim on Printing

A comic book page is shrunk down 60% and gets demagnified. The power and energy of the drawing is lost in that translation. If you look at original art, the art is a lot more bolder and their is more variance in the lines. It's almost like stage make-up. If you ever go to a play you will see that actors wear a lot more heavy make-up than people ever would in real life. That's done so that people can see it clearly from a distance. That is why your artwork needs to be bold. Much can be lost in the printing process.

Jim on Details

You have to have a mix of details, because you want to create this illusion of realism and reality. But if you have too much of it you begin to lose the really forceful strong shapes and compositions you can get by just keeping it simple.

Jim on designing Costumes

Designing costumes is kind of a thankless task. People tend to hate anything that is new or changed. I think you have to go for the core elements that are critical to the look of the costume, then freely delete or change the things that look a little dated. When we did the New 52 we had a mission statement to update the looks and make them as contemporary as possible. That was the single driving design that was going into all the costume changes. You want to be able to look at the character from a distance and still be able to recognize the iconic elements of the character. I'll pull up reference of every iteration of that character's costume. Then I'll look at design books. It's all about the silhouette, the shape and colors, the elements that make that character that character.

Jim on Career

What kind of defined my early career was a hunger for knowledge. When I started out as a penciller I got really interested in inkling and inking techniques. I just started talking to inkers and that's how I started inking my own work. I got really interested in writing, in plotting and how these guys constructed stories. When we started Image Comics, I was just never really afraid of anything. I love that sense of adventure, of jumping off into the deep end. When I came to DC it was a lot of the same feeling. Can I handle all this and still be able to draw? I love the challenge and don't want to be complacent. They always say if you can't dream it you can't achieve it. I really believe in that.

Jim Lee's achievements in the comic book field are already legend. Who can imagine where his dreams will take him next?

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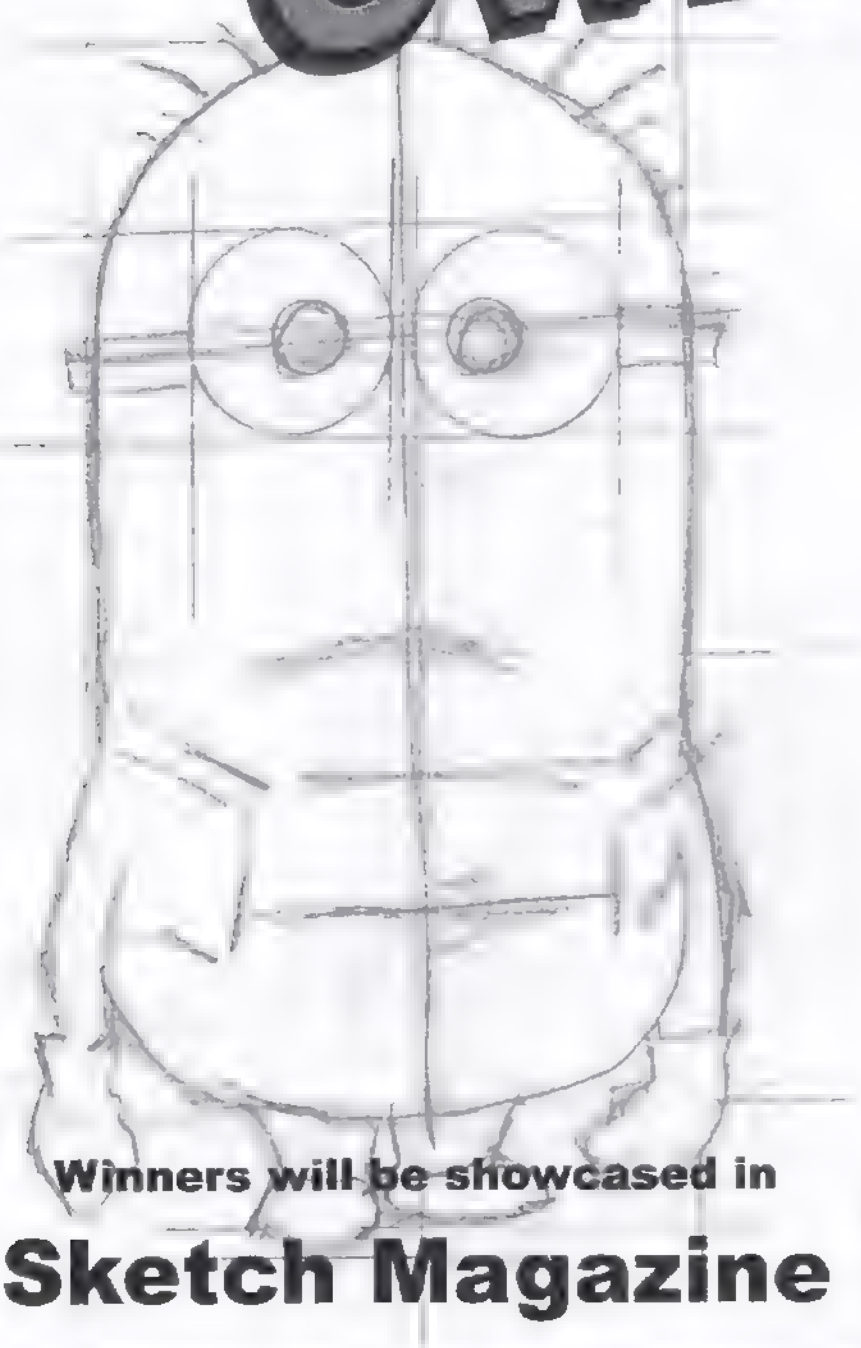

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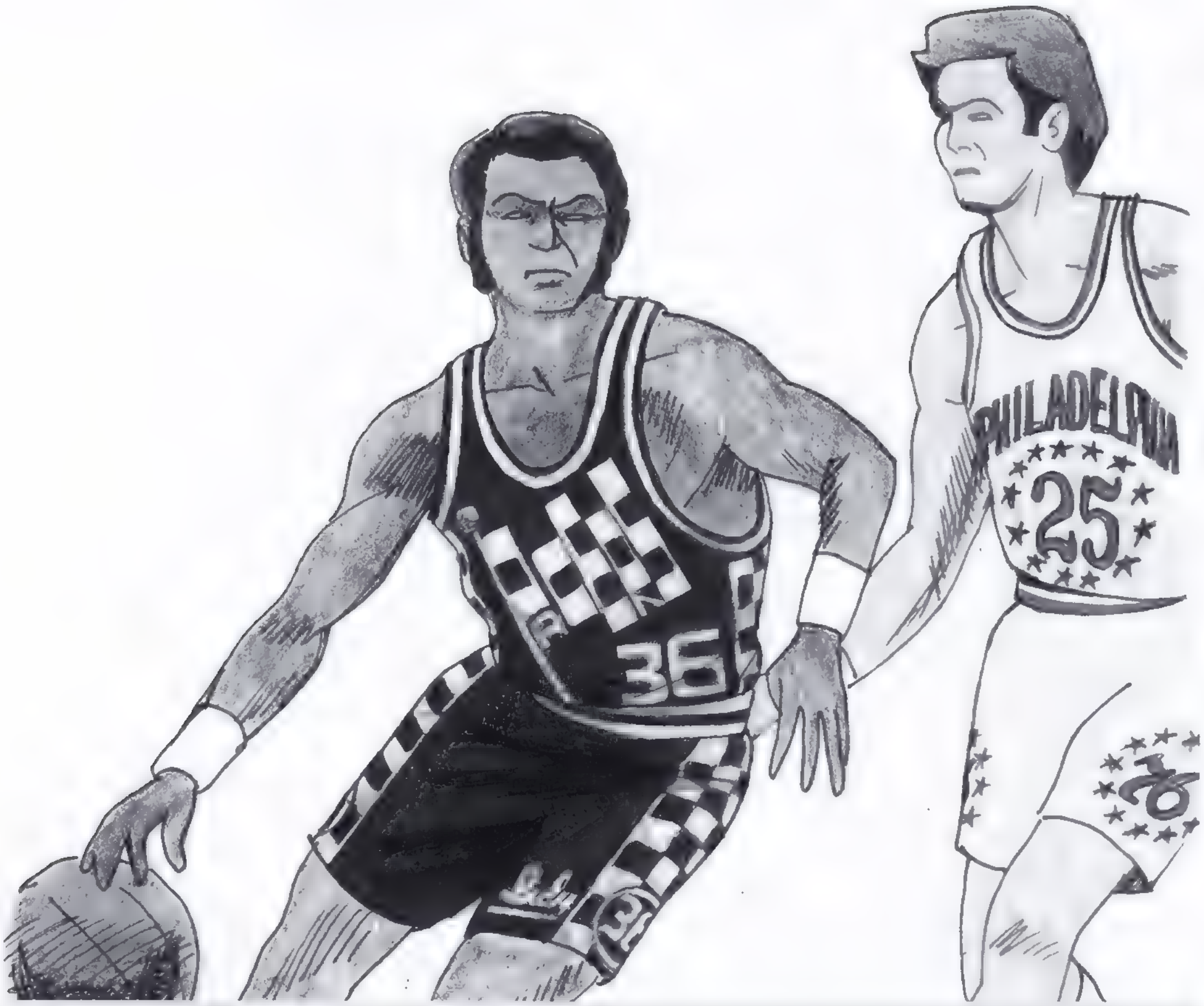


The Universe at Your Finger Tips

Thoughts on Scripting Comic Books

by Tom Bierbaum

Protecting Yourself

- Be there.
- Don't bad-mouth your colleagues, even to those who don't like them.
- Remember That Everything You Say Can be Repeated, Every E-Mail Can Be Forwarded
- There are people who will repeat everything you say, and I mean everything, at the worst possible time to the worst possible person.
- If You Wouldn't Say It To Their Face, Don't Say it
- Pick Your Fights Carefully.
- Associate with People Who Get Along
- Get Attention With Your Performance, Not Your Attitude or Your Words

My wife and I are probably best known for working on DC's "Legion of Super-Heroes", arguably the most over-populated concept in comics history. So if there's one thing I might know something about, it's probably writing a group book without going insane.

So if you're creating your own group concept or aspire to write a group book, here are a few pointers:

1. Know the Group.

The big advantage we had when we tackled the Legion was that we'd been big fans of the concept for many years and really knew it well. We'd developed an intrinsic sense of who was how, who'd act in what way and what the lay of the land was in the Legion's universe.

So if you *aren't* a lifelong fan of the group, do your homework. Really get to know the characters by reading as many of their earlier issues as possible and get your hands on any "Who's Who" entries and role-playing game guides. Sample on-line commentary, criticism and discussion. And if you can, get some feedback from the editor on what he or she thinks the key components of the concept are. If the series has a "bible" (an official outline of the concept and its key characteristics), get a copy of it.

2. Write It Down.

As you do this research, take notes. Develop your take on each character as you learn about him or her. Scribble down ideas for stories and plot threads as you deepen your knowledge of the concept. Make little charts, lists and diagrams to teach yourself the relationships and interconnections of the universe you're learning.

If you don't write it down, it's going to mostly just flow in and out of your head and all of those little building blocks and chunks of inspiration that you've generated are going to just drift off into the mists.

3.) Don't Know Your Group *Too* Well.

Maybe the biggest disadvantage we had when we wrote the Legion was that we knew the concept so well that we missed some times when the readers were not getting all the information they needed on the pages of the comic. *We* knew that Lightning had died and been revived in the early days of the Legion but a lot of our readers didn't know and would need to have that spelled out for them if it was important to a current story.

So if you do know the group inside and out – especially if you created the concept – make it a very regular exercise to take a big step back and look at your story through the eyes of a complete newcomer to the group.

As we were reminded many times by our editors, every issue of your comic is somebody's first issue of your comic.

4.) Give the Characters Strong Identity Pegs.

I think this is the single most important requirement of a group book. It's imperative that you find lots of ways to make each character immediately identifiable to the reader. Most fans will give up on a comic pretty quickly if they have to spend any amount of time staring at the page trying to figure out which character is which.

A lot of these identity pegs will necessarily fall to the artist, but you can't just sit back and trust that the visuals will address this important requirement. Work closely with the art team to make sure every character is unique and distinctive visually. You can call for things in your plots and scripts that will guarantee the characters will be as memorable visually as they are conceptually. You can specify hats, glasses, jackets, cleavage, scars, hairstyle and lots of other elements that will communicate personality and set each character apart.

You might also get the chance to work with the colorist to make sure you've got the colors of clothing, hair, skin, etc. being used as much as possible to keep the cast sorted out.

5.) Don't Go Overboard With the Speech Patterns.

The one way to distinguish your characters that I'd soft-peddle is the one thing most under your control – speech patterns. My wife and I came into the business at a time when the goal was generally to give every character a truly distinctive speech pattern, but we slowly came to realize on the Legion that there weren't enough natural, believable speech patterns in existence to differentiate the dozens of characters we were depicting.

So it's fine if some or your characters speak a little more or less formally than the others. It's okay if some of them are less likely to use contractions or are prone to

dropping the "g's" from their "ing" verbs. Some will naturally use more coarse language than others. But I think today's audience wants only subtle differences in the different characters' speech patterns.

It was getting the point in comics that it was becoming difficult to actually read the words and figure out what was being said because the accents were so pronounced and contrived. At that point, I think, dialogue gets in the way of the story instead of helping to tell it.

Figure out in your mind how each character would really speak, so that you subtly capture different voices that really communicate the essence of each character. Don't do anything over the top that distracts from the flow of a good story, but figure out how each character sounds and reproduce that sound in your dialogue. (For a more complete discussion of dialogue and speech patterns, see my column in Sketch #7.)

6. Figure Out What Makes Each Character Special and Then Show It.

Construct your stories so the roles of each character bring out what makes that character unique. If they're a hothead or a flirt or a gossip or a whiner or a bully, show them acting out those roles in ways that advance the story.

Plan and chart your stories based on who the characters are and what makes them interesting. What kinds of situations would be interesting for these particular characters? And what kinds of situations would their personalities naturally end up in?

But as with the speech patterns, don't get too broad or too heavy-handed in these depictions. Keep the characterizations strong and clear, but with some depth and nuance, so the readers really get to know the different characters in a hurry, but are never 100 percent sure what's coming next from any given character.

7. Use as Models People You Know or Have Researched.

To avoid turning your characters into clichés, use people you know and have read about as guides for those characters. If you've got a hothead character, look for ideas for where to go with the character from a real-life hothead you know. If your character is a womanizer, read about real-life womanizers and what they're really like and what their backgrounds are like. When your research comes up with actions and characteristics that surprise you, use them to surprise your readers.

Don't give your readers a thinly disguised version of Wolverine or Wally West, give them a take on the character type that they haven't seen in a comic book before, because it's something you've discovered yourself through your own observations and research.

8. Figure Out How Your Different Characters Will Collide and Come Into Conflict.

Again observing from life, see how real people come into conflict with each other and work those dynamics into your group. There's a tendency to dwell on superficial conflict – Character X is conservative and Character Y is liberal so they argue about politics. In fact, a lot of people come into conflict with other people not because they're so different but because they're so similar. If you're naturally assertive, you'll tend to conflict with other people who are naturally assertive and maybe get along better with people who tend to be more withdrawn.

But don't just think in terms of eternal, constant conflict. Everyone's different. Some people have conflicts with almost everyone and some people get along with almost everyone. Some people hate confrontations and some people thrive on them. Some people are hugely sensitive and insecure and some people let criticism and hostility roll right off their backs. And sometimes the same person can be both things at different times, depending on the situation they're in and with whom they're dealing. Map out the natural conflicts and also the natural friendships and alliances that would form.

Observe and write about real group dynamics rather than broad, "comic-booky" conflicts. And work these dynamics into your team at the conceptual stage, so the interaction is interesting no matter what adventures await them. Figure out not only interesting characters, but characters that are interesting in how they interact with each other.

9. Think About How Group Books Differ from Solo Books.

Good stories are good stories whether they're about a single protagonist or an entire ensemble of protagonists, but there are some basic differences between a group book and a solo book.

The biggest is the need to communicate a lot of information efficiently in a group book and to keep the pace pretty brisk so there's room for a lot of characters to participate in your story.

And because you're dealing with multiple protagonists, you tend to approach your stories as tapestries with various interweaving plot threads, rather than stories that take a simple, linear approach.

You'll tend to develop "shorthand" ways to communicate character and story elements as a way of speeding things up. You'll usually cut back on the use of wordy narration and flowery prose to tell your tales.

It's a good idea to cut very quickly from scene to scene with a minimum of format and gimmickry in the construction of your stories. Leave as much room as possible to simply let a lot of characters do a lot of things.

And it's a good idea to formalize ways to summarize the storyline and fill in background, such as the "Previously" boxes we ran on the letters pages of "Legion of Super-Heroes" and the "Harvey Heads" drawings of the characters that listed their names and powers on the title pages of our "Legionnaires" comic.

10. Understand Why Your Group Exists and What Makes It Special.

Get a handle of what function the group serves and why these people get together. What is the purpose of their interaction and what are their stories about? Write about them doing something, not just sitting around a headquarters training or coming under attack.

Get a handle on how your group is different from other similar concepts and keep those differences in mind as you map out your directions and storylines.

11. Plan Ahead, Map Out, Diagram.

Almost inevitably, your stories are going to get complicated, so take notes and work out the overall details of your storyline on paper. Make maps and diagrams that keep track of the necessary pieces and the important elements that are inter-related. Don't let it just rattle around in your head vaguely seeming to hold together, get it down on paper and prove to yourself that it does indeed hold together.

Keep track of which character is where, making sure you're not losing track of anyone or leaving a loose thread un-resolved. Is every super-hero getting a chance to use his super-power somewhere? Are the key character pegs getting used?

Work to give the characters roles that are really organic to the story rather than just splitting the team into three squads to go out and find the three components of the doomsday weapon.

Is the right amount of time passing as each of your subplots progresses, or is one storyline stuck in one spot during one pivotal moment while days and weeks are passing for your other storylines?

12. Think of Each Issue As a Separate Unit.

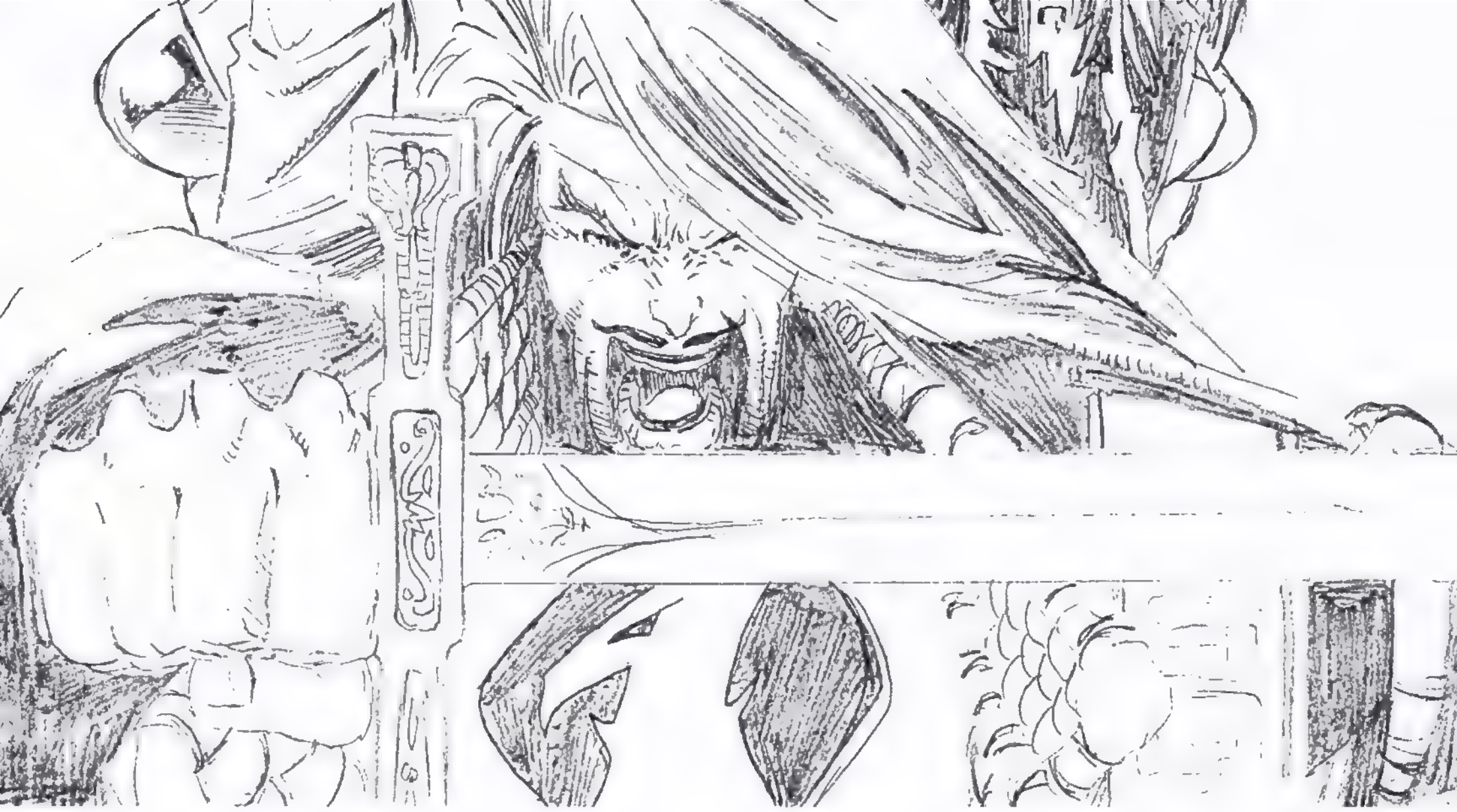
Most group books tend to tell multi-issue stories, but resist the urge to tell just small chunks of your overall story in each issue. As much as possible, make each issue a self-contained story that's part of the bigger arc, so there's a feeling of satisfaction and "closure" at the end of each issue, even if it's only one part of a 10-part epic. Have readers ending each issue with a feeling of satisfaction, so the time and money the comic required feels well-spent, and you'll get another sale next month.

Of course, it also helps to bring readers back if, in addition to some sort of satisfying wrap-up, your issue includes some good "cliff-hanger" elements. Try to leave open some question or dilemma that the readers will really want to see resolved and make it clear they can get some answers if they plunk down their money next month.

13. Don't Be Afraid to Keep Some Characters in the Background.

One of the big mistakes group books can make is to decide that every character that's included in a story has to serve a specific, significant function in the story. That drives you to leave out team members if you don't have anything important for them to do and your group book starts losing some of what makes group books appealing – lots of characters.

People in general and kids especially love crowded universes with lots of interesting characters. So rather than killing yourself by including a lot of characters and



trying to give every one of them an important role, let some of the team members just occupy the background and move into the foreground only when it helps the story. It might take a few issues or even a few years to really shine the spotlight on some teammates or member of the supporting cast, but readers enjoy the process of wondering about that background character and not knowing when and if they'll get to know more.

14. Value Your Female Characters.

In a male-dominated market like super-hero comics, most solo titles feature male heroes and a big part of the appeal of a group book is the chance to highlight female characters. And now that most comics are read by teens and adults, all those male readers are likely to be very interested in female characters on multiple levels, even if they identify more with the male characters.

Group books also create the opportunity to present a diverse cast in terms of ethnic and racial background. It may be a challenge for you to write a solo book about a hero who comes from a completely different background than you, but when you're dealing with a group, it's a great opportunity to bring in characters from a wide range of backgrounds. You still need to educate yourself and exert a lot of empathy to avoid stereotypes and keep each character human and three-dimensional, but that challenge can be quite a bit easier when the character isn't getting the spotlight exclusively the way a solo hero would.

15. Showcase the Romantic Relationships.

Even a mostly male readership is going to always be very interested in who's attracted to whom and who's dating whom. One of the most durable and successful storylines is to establish an unspoken attraction and let the reader anticipate when and if that attraction might express itself. And be creative with these kinds of storylines. Take them in new and unexpected directions, so the reader will feel real suspense about how, when and if the unspoken attraction may flower into a real relationship.

16. Group Books Bring Some Freedoms, But Don't Overdo It.

With an ensemble of heroes, there's a lot more freedom to do things like kill off heroes, marry them off and show them having babies. But so many of those things have been done over and over through the years that you may find it hard to tell fresh, original stories with those elements. I say use those kinds of things sparingly and generally wait until you've truly found some spark of inspiration that will make what you're doing new and memorable.

And that's a good overall rule for group books and all kinds of books in general. Have fun, explore some innovative possibilities and find a way to surprise your readers.

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MIKE BARON

ON WRITING

Writers are people who have to write. They write every day. They don't talk about it, they do it. People who don't write every day are not serious writers. All right. Five days a week, minimum. This is about writing comic books, but it applies to all fiction.

You must know your craft, the rules of grammar, how to conjugate a verb. Don't get nervous. Most of you already know this without the fancy labels. *I see, you see, he sees.* It is part of your instinctive grasp of English. Everyone needs a little book of rules. For the writer, it is *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White. This slim volume has been in continuous publication since 1935. It takes an hour to read and is quite droll. Buy a used copy. *Do not get the illustrated version.* It has been bowdlerized in the name of pc.

All good fiction, whether comics or otherwise, is built around character. We humans are mostly interested in our own kind. The more interesting your protagonist, the better your story. Stories start with people. The TV show *House* on Fox is a perfect example. Hugh Laurie's character is so thorny and unpredictable people tune in week after week out of fascination with his personality. Same thing with *Batman*, since Denny O'Neil straightened him out. Prior to O'Neil, Batman wandered from mood to mood, often "humorous," seldom entertaining. Denny made Batman a self-righteous obsessive/compulsive. Obsession is always interesting.

While it's possible to grow a great story out of pure plot, sooner or later it will hinge on the characters of your protagonists. "Character is destiny" holds true in fiction as well as life. Know who your characters are before you start writing. Some writers construct elaborate histories for each character before they begin. It is not a bad idea. Start with people then add the plot. Get a bulletin board. Write each character's name and salient characteristics on a 3 X 5 card and tack it to the bulletin board. You can do the same with plot points. You can move characters and plot points around to alter your chronology.

What is plot? It's a dynamic narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. It's like a good pop song. It has to have a *hook*. Sometimes that hook is simply the narrator's voice. *Huckleberry Finn* succeeds mostly on the strength of Huck's voice, by which I mean the way he presents words. In other words, it's not the meat, it's the motion. It's not what you say, it's the way that you say it. Huck comes alive through his words, which are fresh and immediate. We feel we know Huck. Same thing with Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. It's that world-weary, cynical with a heart-of-gold voice whispering in your ear. "He looked about as inconspicuous as a

tarantula on a slice of angel food." Chandler also said, "A good story cannot be devised, it has to be distilled." In other words, start with character and let character find the plot.

Comic writers think visually. No matter how bad our chops we can pretty much describe what we see in words. Some of us can even draw a little bit. I used to write comics by drawing every page out by hand—everything—all the tiny details, facial expressions, warped anatomy, half-assed perspective, all word balloons and captions. Editors and artists loved it. Why? Because they had everything they needed on one page instead of spread across three pages of single-spaced type. Some of the most successful writers in the industry write very densely. Each script is a phone book.

While drawing I became so immersed in the story I gave myself a spastic rhomboid muscle. Friends! Do not do what I did! Learn to draw properly. That means a drawing board, an ergonomically correct chair, and applying the pencil lightly to the paper. So much for art advice.

There is another advantage for writers who would draw each page. It forces you to confront issues of pacing, camera placement, and editing. It teaches you the natural pace of a story, when to break a scene, when to zoom in for a close-up, and when to pull way back for a two-page spread. Archie Goodwin and Harvey Kurtzman both used this method when writing comics for other artists. I'm not advocating such. Most of the best writers in this industry do not draw. If they do, they still write full script.

Even though you are only providing words, it is up to you to SHOW, DON'T TELL. This is the prime directive. What's the dif? Tell: "The assassin drew a bead on Mac's back and pulled the trigger."

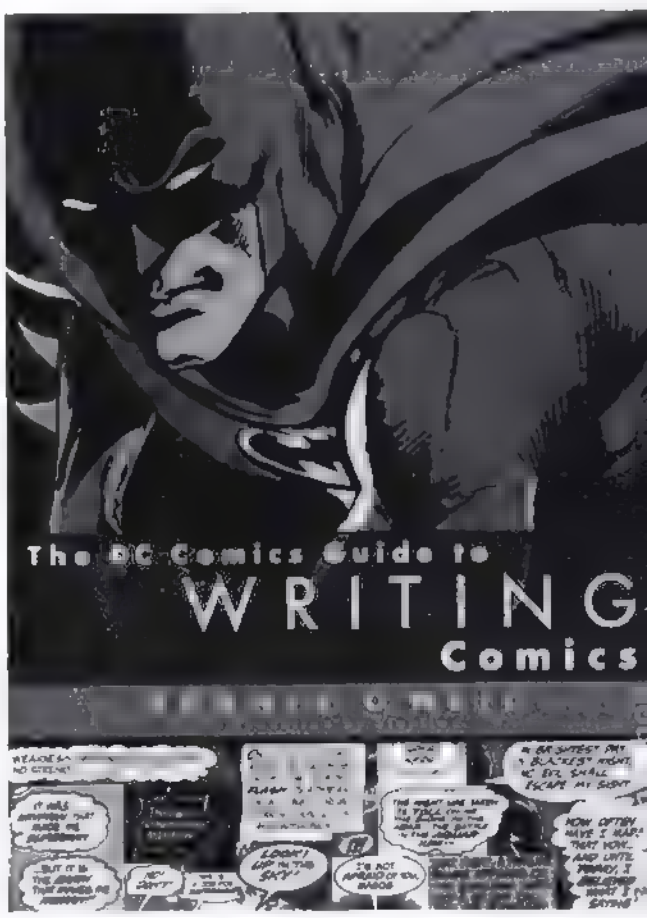
Show: "Mac stared at the wall. He was still staring when a thirty foot giant slammed him in the back with a titanium driver. A creeping numbness radiated from his right shoulder followed by the gush of warm blood and the scent of sheared copper." We don't have to mention the assassin because obviously someone pulled the trigger.

When writing for comics, try to show as much as possible. A finicky man entering a public phone booth might pull out a handkerchief to wipe the receiver. Maybe he's obsessive/compulsive. Maybe he carries a box of Sani-wipes with him everywhere. By showing this man wiping down the receiver, you have established something about his character.

Never describe what the reader can see for himself.

There's no established format for comic scripts. You can't go wrong by doing it as a film script. You don't necessarily need a screenplay writing program, just write it like a play. What does a play look like? Brush up your Shakespeare. There are a lot of books out there on writing comics. I've contributed to some of them. It never hurts to read about writing. We're all curious as to how other writers do it. Many aspiring writers have recommended Robert McKee's *Story* as the way to go. While *Story* contains good advice, it is also egregiously padded and never uses a nickel when a fifty cent piece will do. Joe Esterhaz' *The Devil's Guide to Hollywood* is the anti-*Story*. If you read one, you must read the other.

There's also Denny's *DC Comic' Guide to Writing Comics*, a no bullshit primer by one of the best.



There are no writing schools but there are many writing programs. College level courses on comic book writing are a bull market. I'd advise any struggling writer with a Master's degree to head toward the local college. Run don't walk. Nobody can teach you how to write. You either got it or you ain't. But a good teacher can help you improve your writing. Famous novelists in residence offer a career shortcut to those who are determined to become novelists or screenwriters. Same old adage, it's not what you know, it's who you know.

James Hudnall has an essay on writing that comes and goes on James' homepage like a mirage. Go to www.hameshudnall.com and say James, where's that great column on writing at?
Elmore Leonard has a few choice words on writing:
http://www.elmoreleonard.com/index.php?/weblog/more/elmore_leonards_ten_rules_of_writing/

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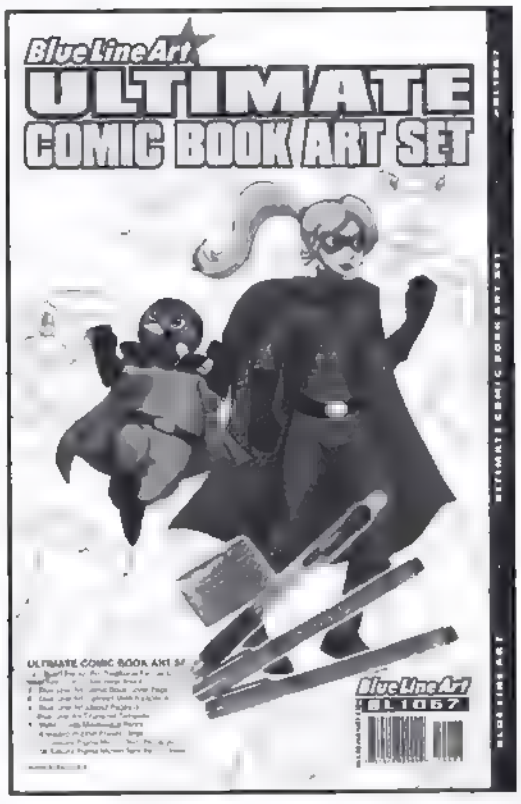

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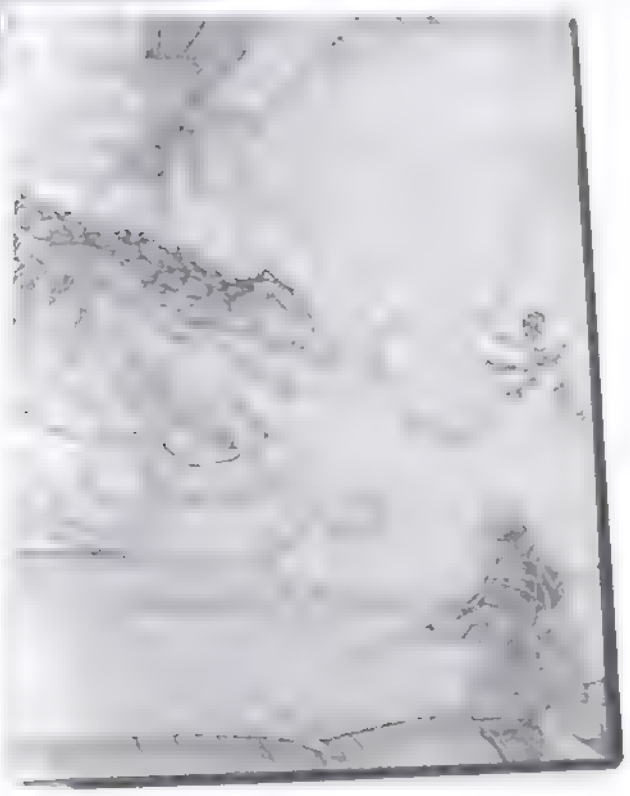

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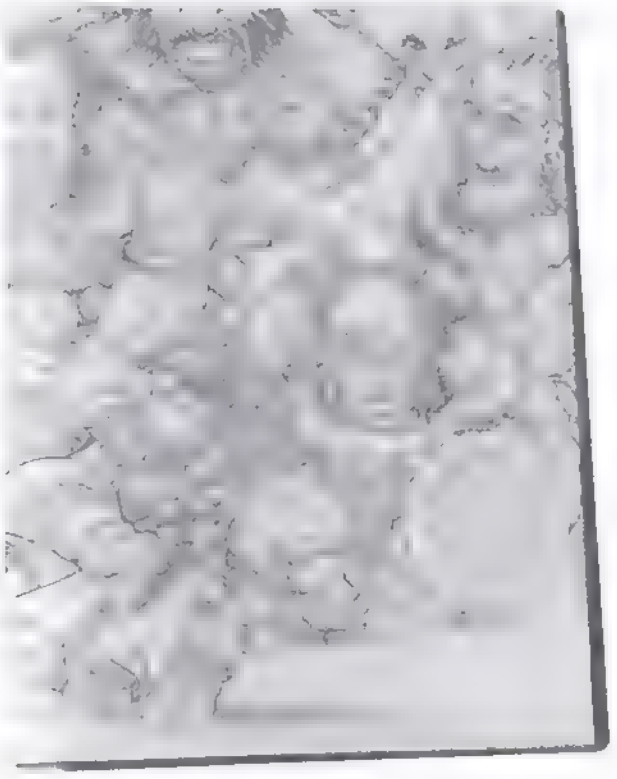

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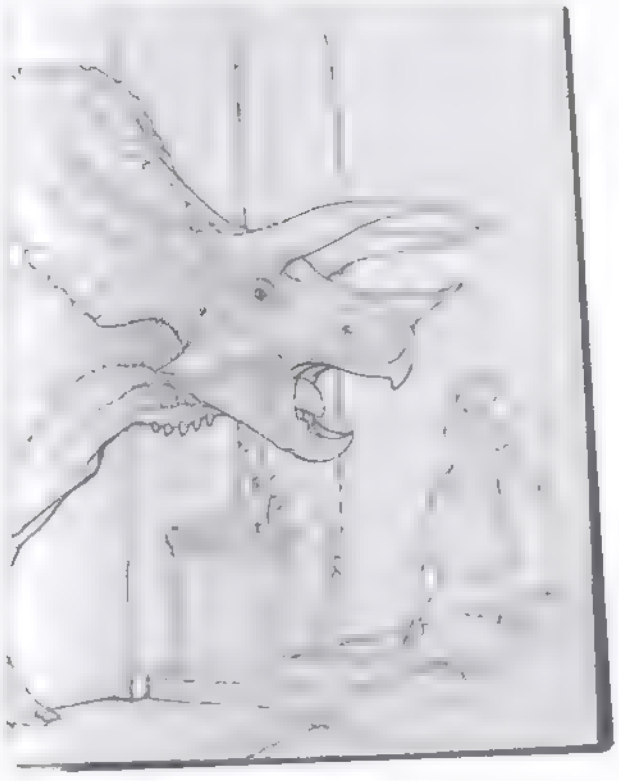

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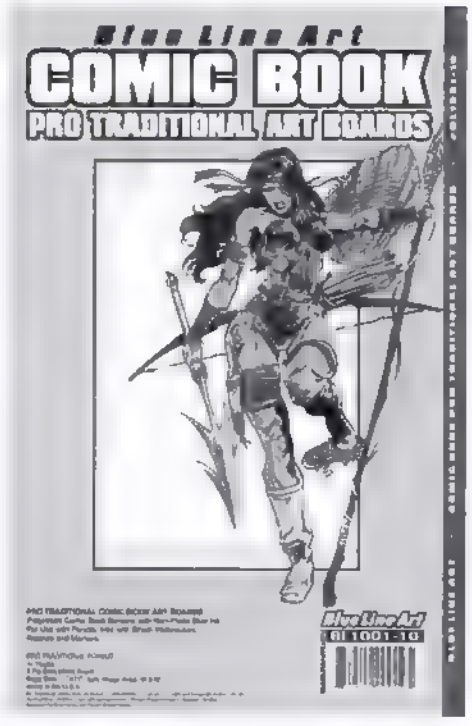

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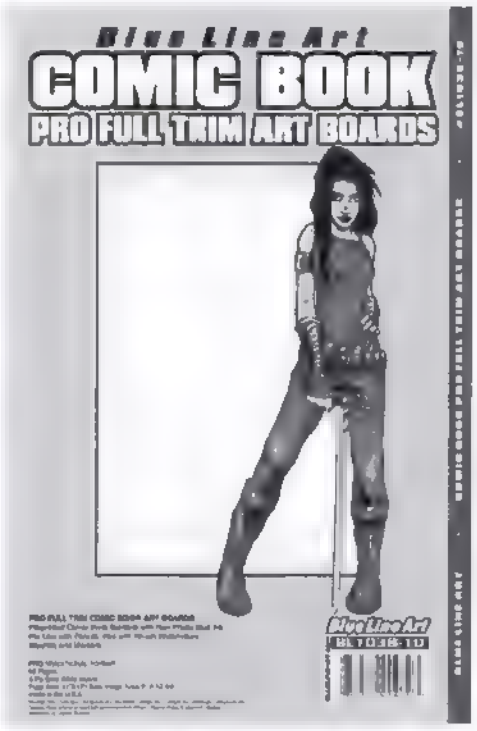

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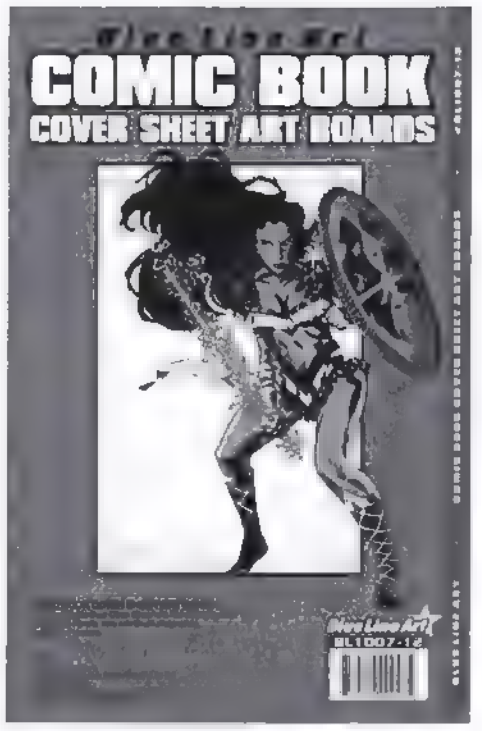

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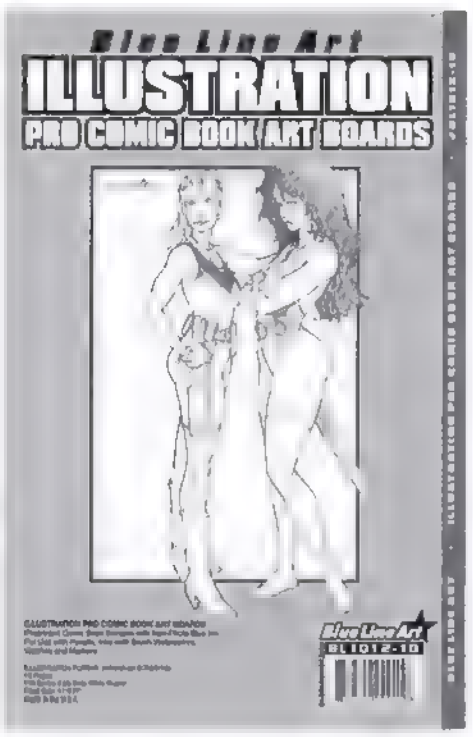

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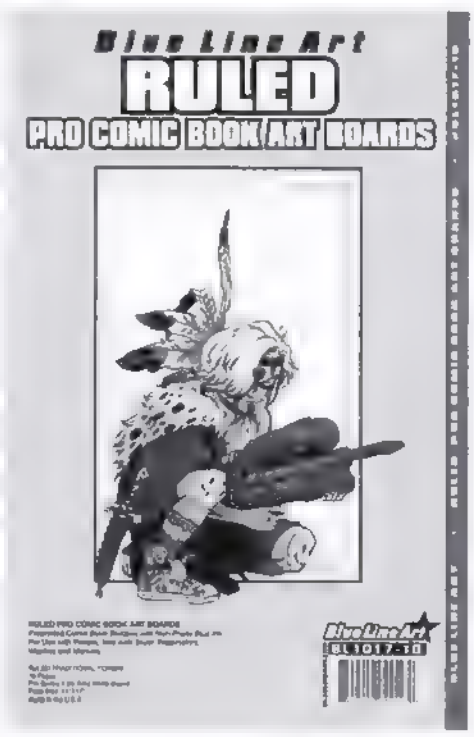

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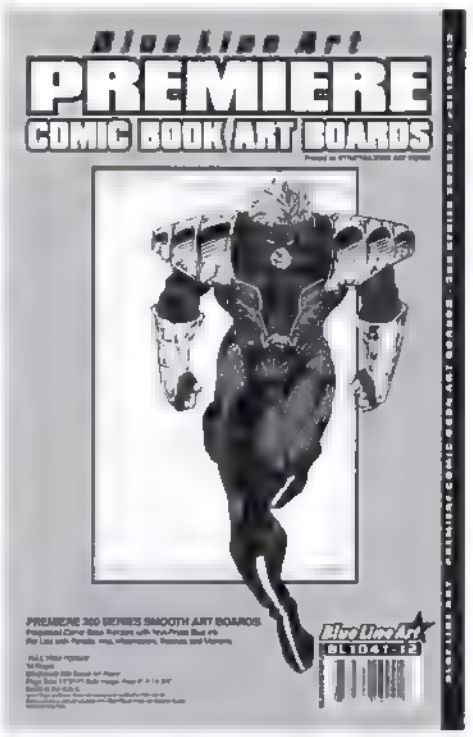

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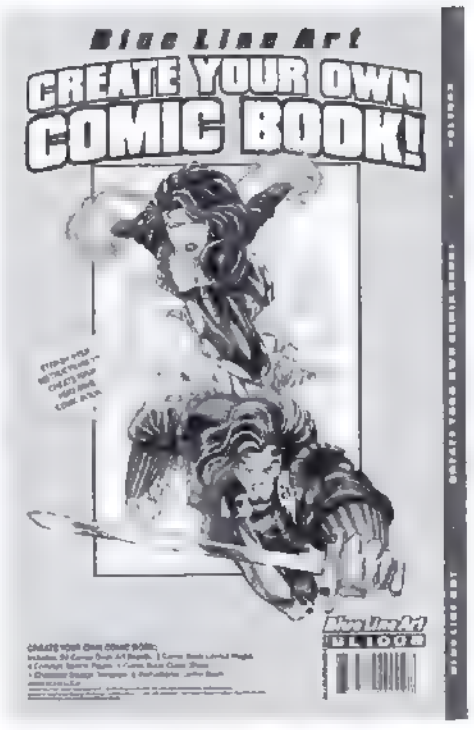

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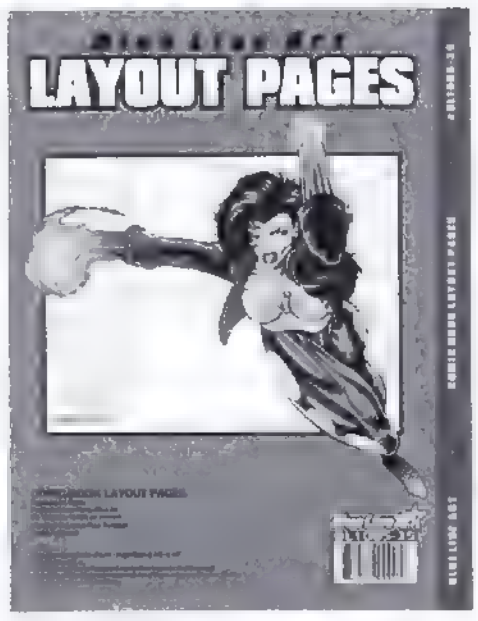

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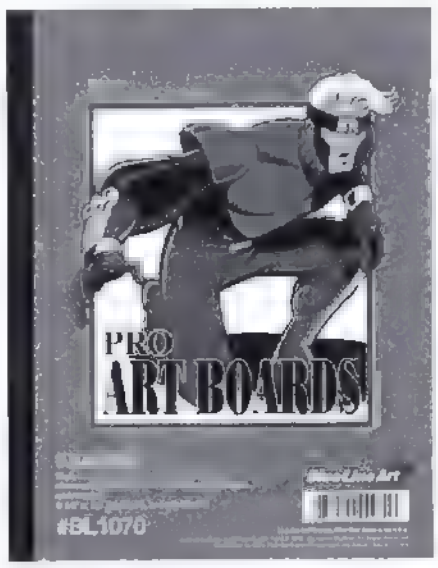

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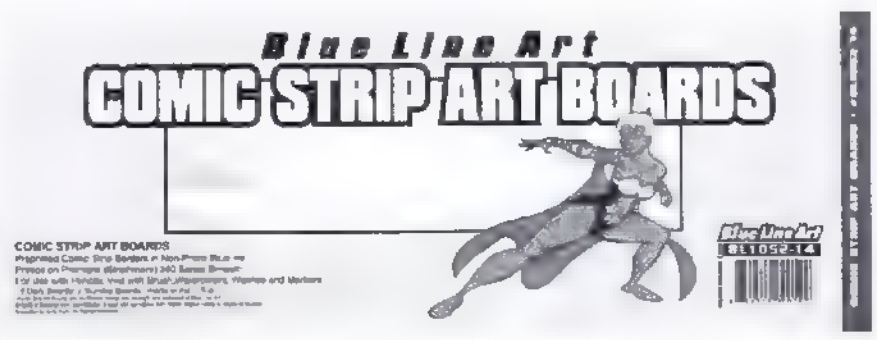

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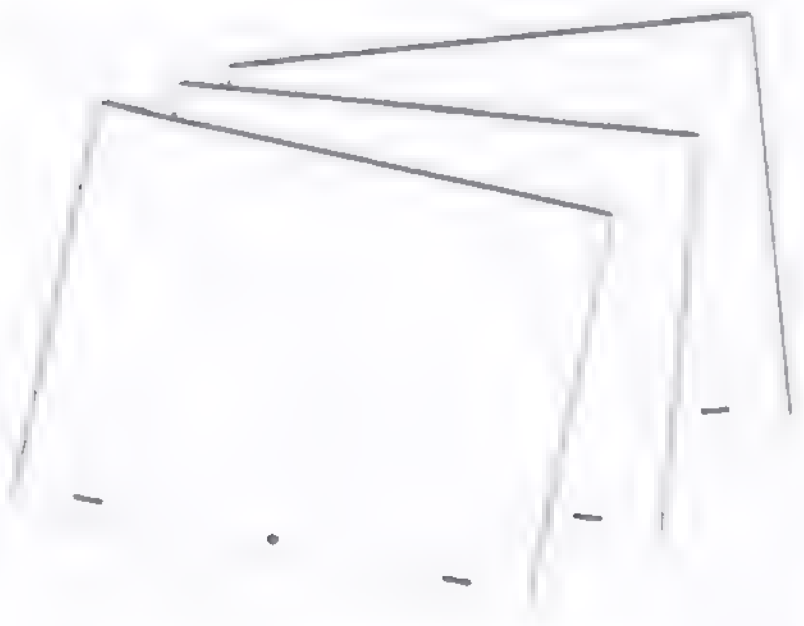

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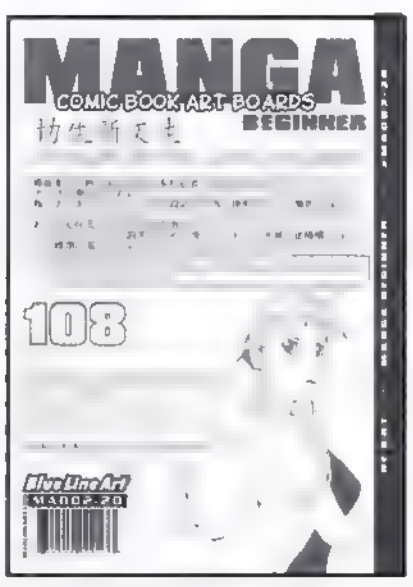
• 8 1/4 x 11 3/4 (20 SHEETS)
Item No.: MA001-20/ UPC. 85454900012 6
Price: $7.95



MANGA COMIC BOOK PAPER (A4) 1PLY
• 8 1/4 x 11 3/4 (20 SHEETS)
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Price· $9.95

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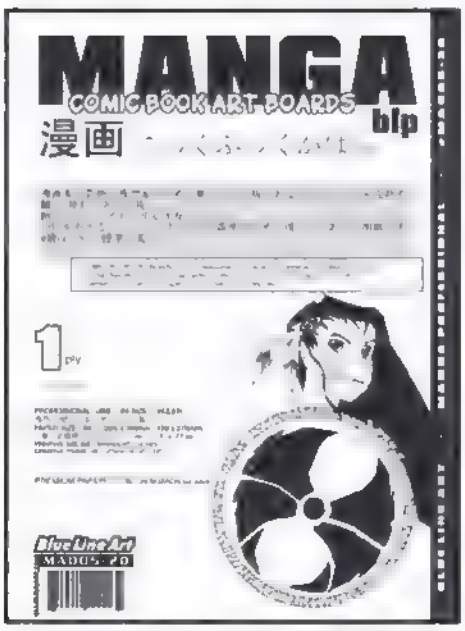

MANGA COMIC BOOK PAPER (A4) 1PLY
• 10 x 14 1/4 (20 SHEETS)
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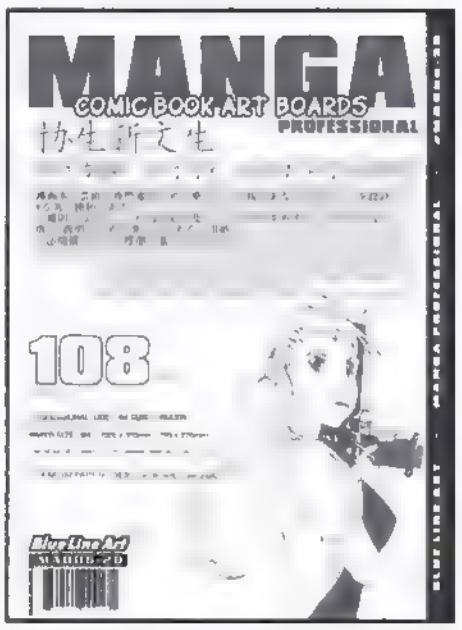

MANGA COMIC BOOK PAPER (A4) 1PLY
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• 3 ½" x 5 ½" (90 x 140 mm)
3" x 5 1/4" printed frame
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SRP $5 95

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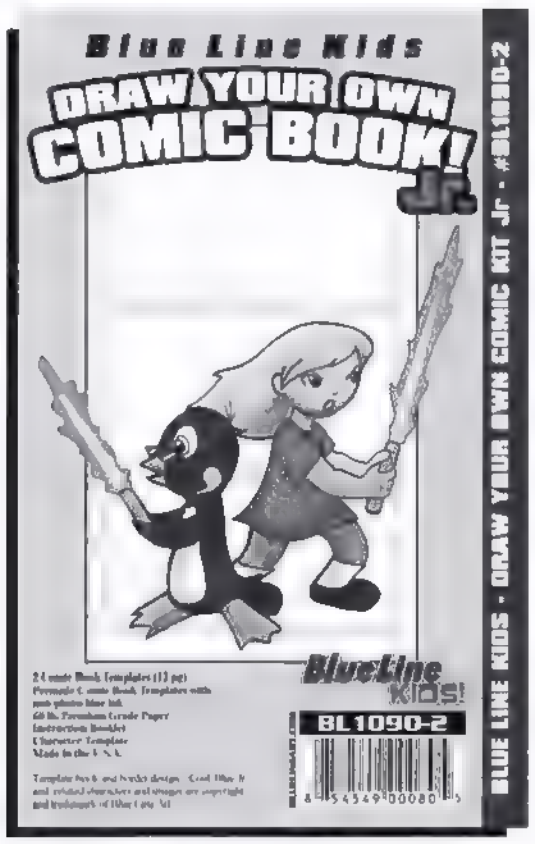
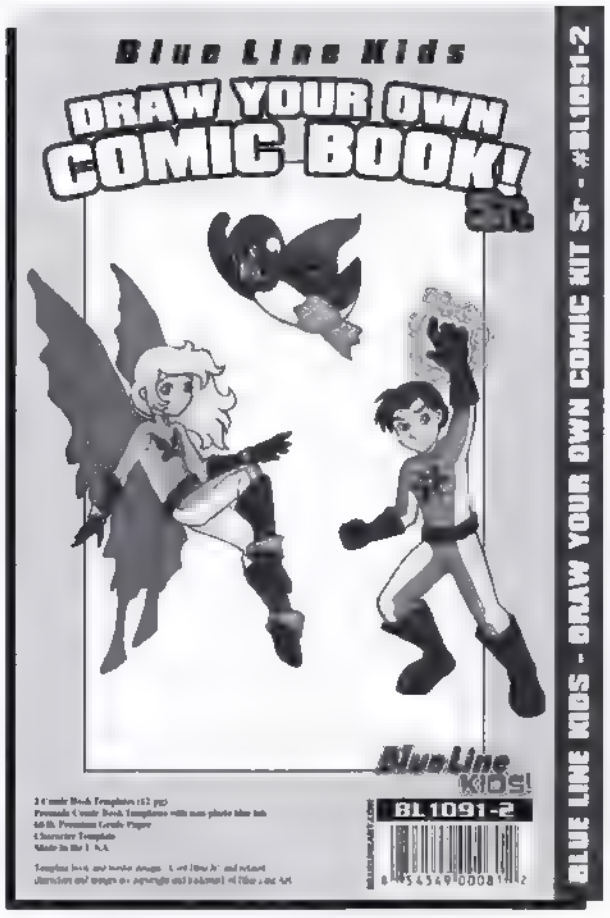
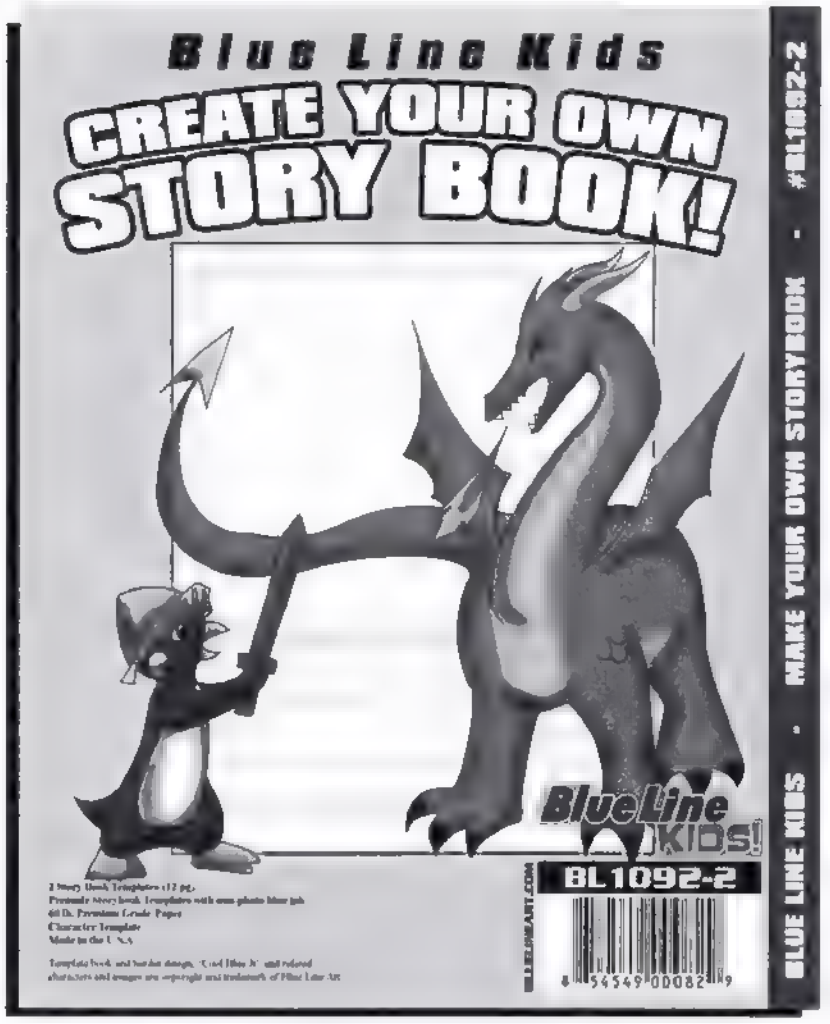
Blue Line KIDS!



BLUE LINE KIDS
DRAW YOUR OWN COMIC KIT Jr.
2 - 5" X 8" Comic with printed borders.
ITEM# BL1090-2 / SRP $6.95
DELUXE - ITEM# BL1093-2 / SRP $14 95



BLUE LINE KIDS
DRAW YOUR OWN COMIC KIT Sr.
2 - 6.75" X 10.25" Comic with printed borders
ITEM# BL1091-2 / SRP $7.95
DELUXE - ITEM# BL1094-2 / SRP $15.95



BLUE LINE KIDS
CREATE YOUR OWN STORY BOOK!
2 - 8" X 10" Books with printed borders.
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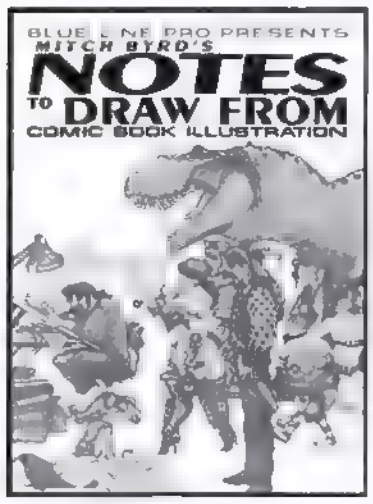
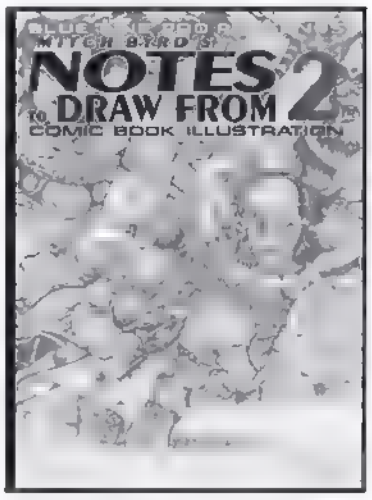


NOTES TO DRAW FROM COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATION
by Mitch Byrd
104 pg. / Black and white
w/ full color cover.
ITEM# BL3010 / SRP $19.99



NOTES TO DRAW FROM 2 COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATION
By Mitch Byrd
104 pg / Black and white
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MITCH BYRD SCRIBBLES AND SKETCHES
by Mitch Byrd
200 pages / Black and white
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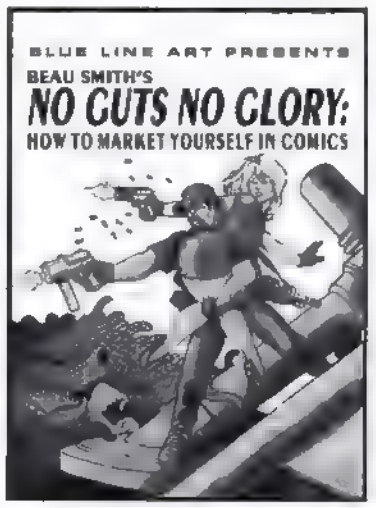

Beau Smith's
No Guts, No Glory:How To Market Yourself
100+ pages Colored Cover/ B&W, Perfect binding
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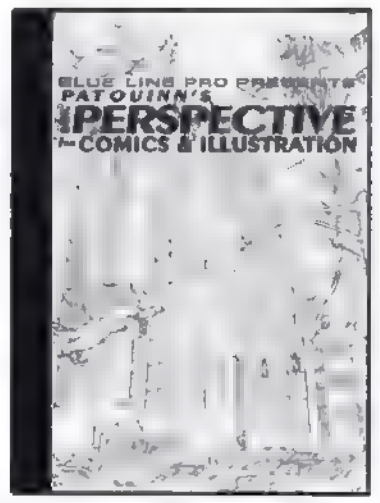

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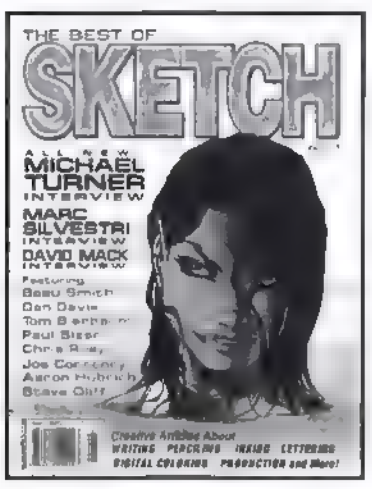
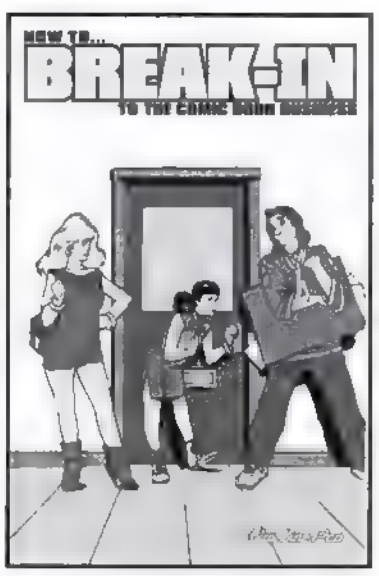
Basic Perspective for Comics & Illustration
56 pages / Full Color
ITEM #BL3020 / SRP $12 99



Best of Sketch Magazine vol. 1
100+ pages Colored Cover/ B&W, Perfect binding
ITEM #SK0001 / SRP $19 95



How to...
BREAK-IN TO THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS
32 pages / Black and white w/ full color cover.
Issue #1
ITEM #BL3031 / SRP $5.95

Issue #2
ITEM #BL3032 / SRP $5.95

Issue #3
ITEM #BL3033 / SRP $5.95

Art Supplies

Here are just a few of the thousands of art supples available on BlueLinePro.com everyday!

BLUE LEADS & HOLDERS

GRAPHGEAR 1000 Automatic Drafting Pencil
The premier drafting pencil for professionals and writing enthusiasts Click the pencil top to reveal an extra-long 4mm fixed sleeve Click the pocket clip to release the heavy spring mechanism and retract the tip Finely chiseled metallic grip is inlaid with soft rubber pads to cushion fingertips Available in **0.3mm, 0.5mm, 0.7mm and 0.9mm.** Refillable with Pentel's Super Hi-Polymer Lead® and Z2-1 refill eraser

ALVIN® Draf/Tec Retrac Mechanical Pencils
High quality mechanical pencils that feature a unique retractable point system Other features include pushbutton lead advance, plastic barrel with rubberized non-slip finger grip and a 4mm long stainless steel lead sleeve that supports the lead and provides drawing accuracy even with thick straightedges. Offered in three lead diameters Built-in eraser under cap. Available in **0.5mm and 0.7mm.**

GRAPHGEAR 500 PG520
This technical drafting pencil with an industrial design features a 4mm fixed sleeve for template work and technical drawings Metallic-mesh grip for precision and control **Available in 0.3mm, 0.5mm, 0.7mm and 0.9mm.** Refillable with Pentel's Super Hi-Polymer® Lead and Z2-1 refill eraser

AutoPoint Blue Leads .9mm Blue Lead, Soft - B 12 refill leads (1-3/8") come in one tube
by Autopoint

12-Non-Photo Blue Leads-2mm.
This pack of 12 2mm non-photo blue leads are handy when you need to replace your lead for a 2mm mechanical pencil

Hi-Polymer BLUE Colored Leads By Pentel
BLUE Colored leads noted for their strength, resilience and density. Created with a special composition that results in a very strong and flexible lead Twelve leads per tube

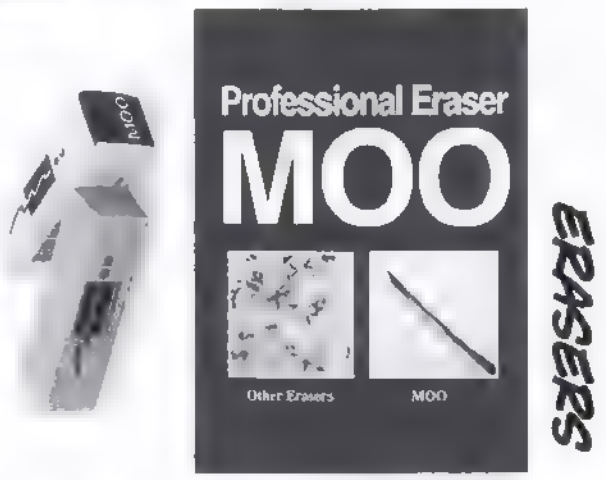
BRUSH & TECH PENS

Pocket Brush Pen by Pentel
This pen has brush like bristles not a felt tip
Create fine to broad lines with a single brush stroke using the Pocket Brush Pen. It is ideal for painting, cartooning, detailing, drawing and sketching, and refillable with permanent pigment ink.

The Fine Tip Black Pigma Sensei Pens Sakura
Essential markers to illustrate in Manga style.
These pens offer versatile nibs to lay down rich, black Pigma Ink that is pigment-based ultraviolet, chemically resistant, archival, waterproof and dries to a neutral pH level
Pigma ink won't bleed through most papers and will not smear or feather when dry
The finer tips are good for facial expressions, lettering or detailing images, while the broader tips can create bold lines to cover large areas and add impact and drama Available in Bold Tip 1 0mm, Fine Tip Black 0 3mm Plastic Tip 0 4mm and Bullet Tip 0.6mm

Faber-Castell (4 PITT artist pen)
Artist pen schwarz/black. Unsurpassably lightfast, pigmented indian ink, waterproof, 4 nibs: s,f,m, brush, acid free/ph-neutral Made in Germany. Imported from Germany, this set includes 4 different nibs S, F, M, and brush. The light Faber-Castell tech pens delivers crisp lines of waterproof Indian ink with a durable pen tip while the brush provides the flexibility of thin to thick. Also Manga Pens and Color Pens.

Bionic Bl@ck Pens BY STABILO
Ergonomically designed with a sleek black non-slip surface over the entire shaft, these easy-to-grip pens features high quality .3mm fine and .5mm medium nickel silver rollerball tips for smooth writing. It utilizes bionic liquid ink technology and is available in four ink colors, red, blue, black and green Ideal for professionals and frequent users.



ERASERS

MOO Professional Artist Erasers
"Moo Erasers" are professional quality They are soft and dense, do not damage paper, erases charcoal, "no little crumbles", no smearing or streaks, and they leave behind less shadow of graphite pencils. The shavings stick together and cling to the soft gray rubber of the eraser, much like dry rubber cement does when rubbed off a surface with a finger, these professional quality art erasers can be used to erase pastels, artist colors and vine charcoal without smears or streaks They lift graphite with less shadow and will not stain or tear paper. Soft and dense, these erasers leave a long roll of used material rather than eraser dust.

Pigma ink is high-quality archival pigment ink that is quick-drying, waterproof, fade- and chemical-resistant and will not smear or feather once dry.

The 8-piece set includes one each of Pigma Micron pen in 005 black .20mm, 01 black .25mm, 02 black .30mm, 03 black 35mm, 05 black .45mm, and 08 black 50mm, a Pigma Graphic 1 black 1.0mm and a .7mm fixed sleeve mechanical pencil

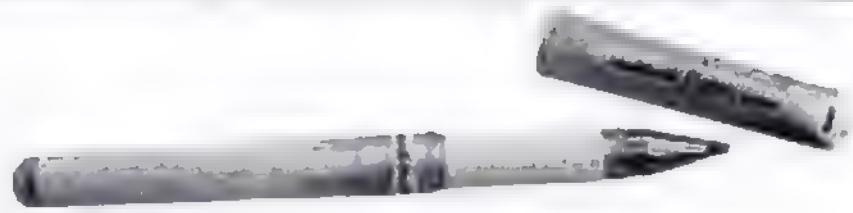
Art Supplies & Portfolios

Here are just a few of the thousands of art supples available on BlueLinePro.com everyday!

COPIC Opaque White
COPIC Opaque White is a water based white pigment used for highlight effects It won't bleed into the base color so it gives sharp line definition and can be used on watercolor as well as other permanent ink surfaces

Deleter White 1 ink
Great for touch ups and white details.
Ink is waterproof Works well drawing lines and painting

White Higgins Ink Warterproof
Use like liquid watercolors for washes and shading Mix or dilute for infinite variety For use with technical pens, lettering pens, and airbrushes. Not recommended for use on drafting film 1 oz bottle.



White Signo Gel Pen
Uni-Ball Signo Opaque gel pen with silky smooth ink that doesn't skip or fade out when it dries. Writes on dark paper, cardstock, photos, over stamped surfaces, etc.
Acid-Free By Sanford

Pentel Sunburst White Gel Pen pen
0.8mm tip writes medium lines, dispenses white opaque acid-free gel ink that pops on dark paper. Perfect for highlights in dark areas.

Sharpie Poster Paint Markers- White Fine Point
The brilliant opaque paint in these poster paint markers stands out against any colored background and will not bleed through paper Great for art projects, posters, signs and scrapbooking. The markers are non-toxic and safe for children to use. Quick drying, acid-free, fade- and water-resistant. Available in four point sizes: extra-fine, fine, medium and extra-bold

FW ACRYLIC INK-WHITE
FW Acrylic Artist Waterproof White Ink (White Out) Great for use with technical pens brushes and dip pens.

Bombay India Ink, Black
Brilliant, pigmented India inks are lightfast, waterproof, non-clogging and non-toxic.

FW Acrylic Artists Black (india)ink
These intensely pigmented acrylic-based inks are waterproof when dry and generally lightfast Compatible with acrylics, they are excellent for use with technical pens, airbrushes, dip pens and traditional brushes. For use on any surface

Higgens Black Magic Ink
This 1oz container of Higgins Black Magic Ink is waterproof non-corrosive and free-flowing ink that does not clog Great for use on tracing vellum and other film surfaces

Black Liquid Sumi Ink
For more than a thousand years, the method of making sumi sticks has remained the same High-quality vegetable oil soot molded and dried to form a solid block which, when ground on a suzun stone with water, turns to ink.
A liquid form of the traditional sumi ink, made of high-quality vegetable oil soot. Eliminating the need for grinding an ink stick, as with traditional sumi ink, it conveniently saves time and is economical.

Gloss Black Liquid Sumi Ink
For more than a thousand years, the method of making sumi sticks has remained the same High-quality vegetable oil soot molded and dried to form a solid block which, when ground on a suzun stone with water, turns to ink
A liquid form of the traditional sumi ink, made of high-quality vegetable oil soot. Eliminating the need for grinding an ink stick, as with traditional sumi ink, it conveniently saves time and is economical.

Art Profolio Professional
Style and Clarity for Serious Artists Your portfolio should have the same degree of craftsmanship and excellence as the work inside The Art Profolio Professional, with its durable leatherette cover, will continue to impress after taking your presentation on the road They feature black, acid-free mounting paper and PVC-free sheet protectors, providing archival-quality storage for your artwork. All books feature permanently-bound spines with 24 pocket sleeves for 48 views."

Artfolio Book
11 x 17 w/ 24 sheets Need a place to store your original artwork and easily transport at the same time. Then Blue Line Pro Artfolios are perfect for you Each portfolio comes with a sturdy black plastic wrap and bind with 24 pages of archival safe and acid free art sleeves Each sheet comes with a separator that allows you to place two sheets in one sleeve. This provides you with the maximum carrying capacity of 48 comic boards. The 11x17 size is a perfect fit for Blue Line Pro comic art boards

ART PRESENT BOOK(11x17) Fabric Edges
Great looking black polypropylene art presentation books with distinctive sewn fabric edges, Artfolio Book 24 sheets
Need a place to store your original artwork and easily transport at the same time Then Blue Line Pro Artfolios are perfect for you Each portfolio comes with a sturdy black plastic wrap and bind with 24 pages of archival safe and acid free art sleeves Each sheet comes with a separator that allows you to place two sheets in one sleeve This provides you with the maximum carrying capacity of 48 comic book art boards.

WHITE OUT & PENS

INKS

PORTFOLIOS & PROTECTION

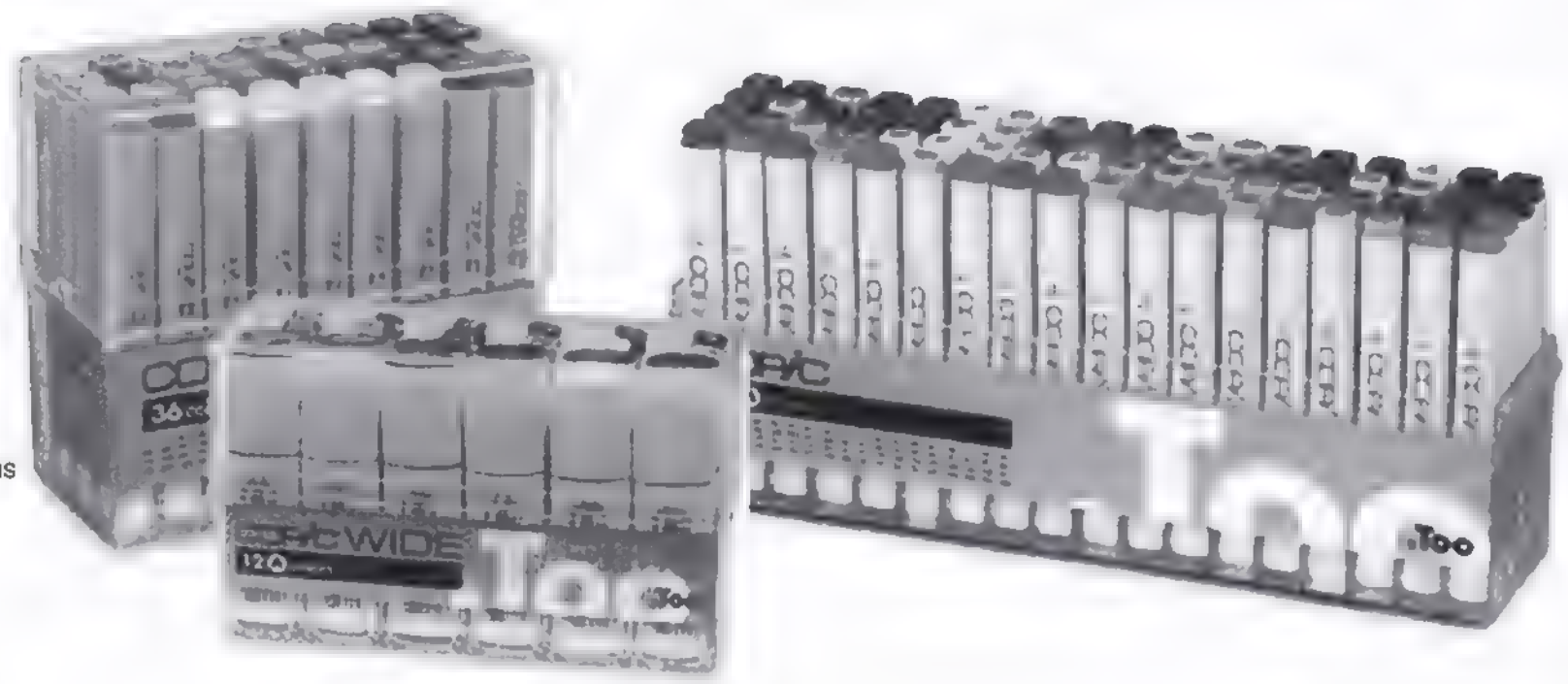
Markers & Club Blue

Here are just a few of the thousands of art supples available on BlueLinePro.com everyday!

COPIC MARKERS

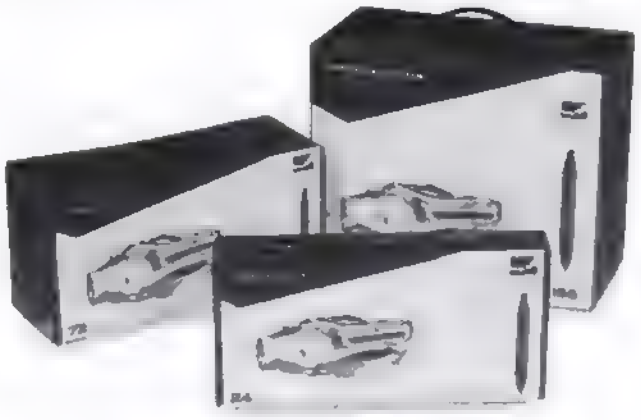
Copic Markers have been widely used in Europe and Asia where their coloring qualities go hand in hand with the style we know as manga. Their versatility and variety lends itself to the imagination of the creator and gives him or her options for their creative style Also see Copic Ink Refills and accessories and Copic SKETCH Markers!

COPIC Markers
COPIC Accessories
COPIC Multiliners & Drawing Pens
COPIC Air Marker Supplies
COPIC Ink Refills
COPIC Marker Sets
COPIC Sketch Markers
COPIC Wide Markers



PRISMACOLOR MARKERS

Prismacolor Double-Ended Brush Tip Markers Flexibility to Create & Color
Introducing Prismacolor's Brush-Fine Art Marker! This marker has a brush tip on one end and a fine tip on the other, making it the perfect marker for fashion, design and hobby applications. The ink is the same that we use in our Chisel-Fine art markers and with one ink source ensures color consistency from end-to-end.Sanford has built a strong reputation with artists who depend on quality and consistency in color. These permanent markers feature two different style nibs that give the artist flexibility.
Featuring the same non-toxic, dye-based alcohol ink as Prismacolor Double-Ended Markers, Prismacolor Brush Tip Markers feature a roll- resistant cap and one ink source, assuring consistency of color from both ends.
Prismacolor Brush Markers
Prismacolor Art Markers
Prismacolor Marker Sets



TRIA MARKERS

Tria's signature feature is its 3 nib design. An Ultra-Fine, Broad and Brush nib all built in to one marker, giving immediate access to multiple line widths.Versatile, High Performance Inks, Tria inks are alcohol based and non-toxic, providing quick drying, even colour laydown. The translucent quality of the inks means they can be overlaid and blended for a variety of stunning visuals.
300 'Digitally Friendly' Colours, The Tria Colour Space uses principles of Hue, Saturation and Luminosity to navigate and control colour. Most graphic software applications use HSL - it's an accurate, digitally compatible way to specify colour.
Tria Markers
Tria Ink Refills,& Accessories
Tria Marker Sets

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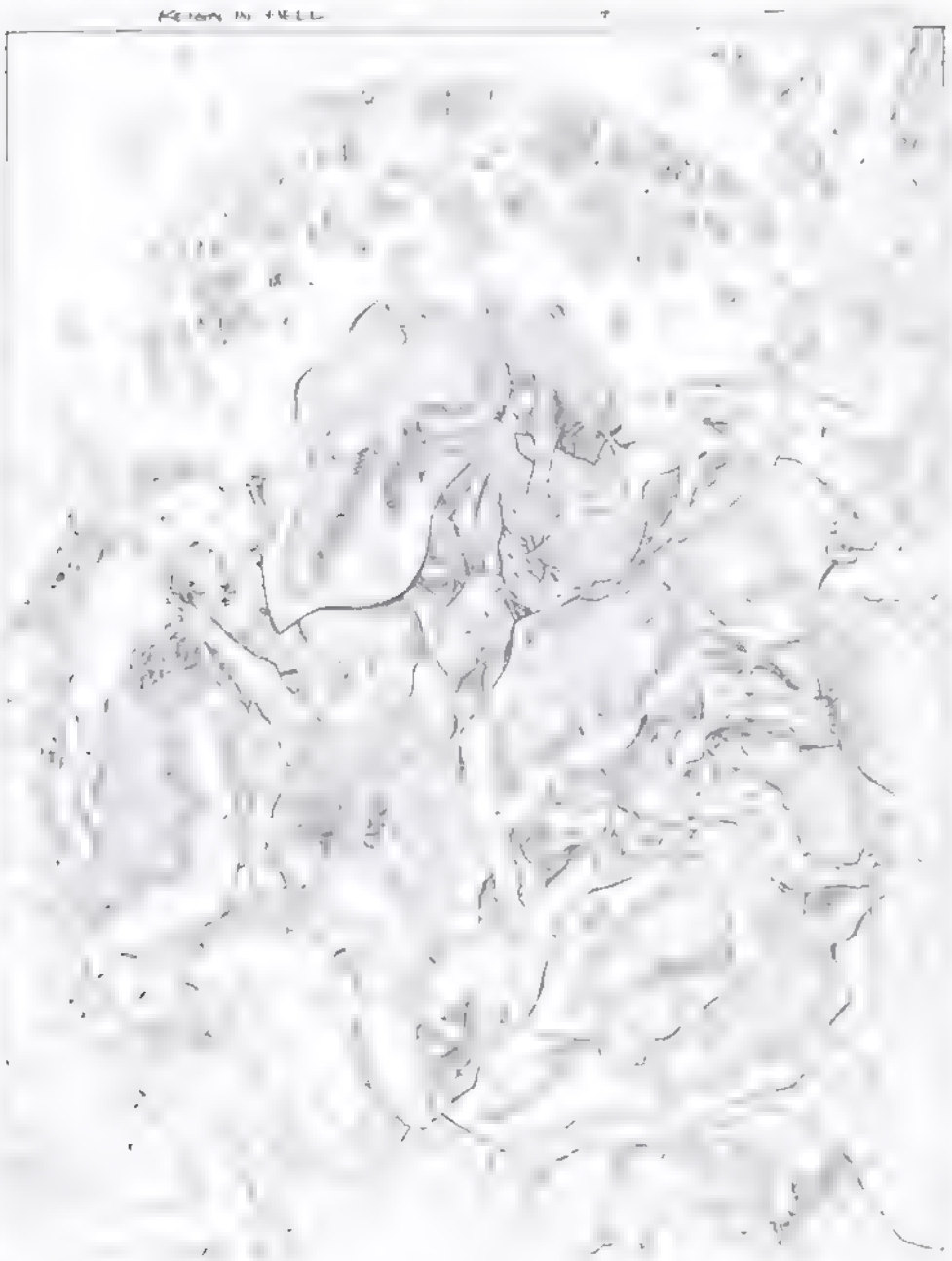
Blue Line Pro's Club Blue Artist Discount Club offers members a Discount on Art Supplies, Blue Line Art Papers and FREE shipping (orders over $99.00). Also Members will receive discounts at conventions that Blue Line Pro is attending when they present their Club Card. BlueLinePro.com is always working toward offering creators the best and most affordable way to expand their creative projects.

INKS

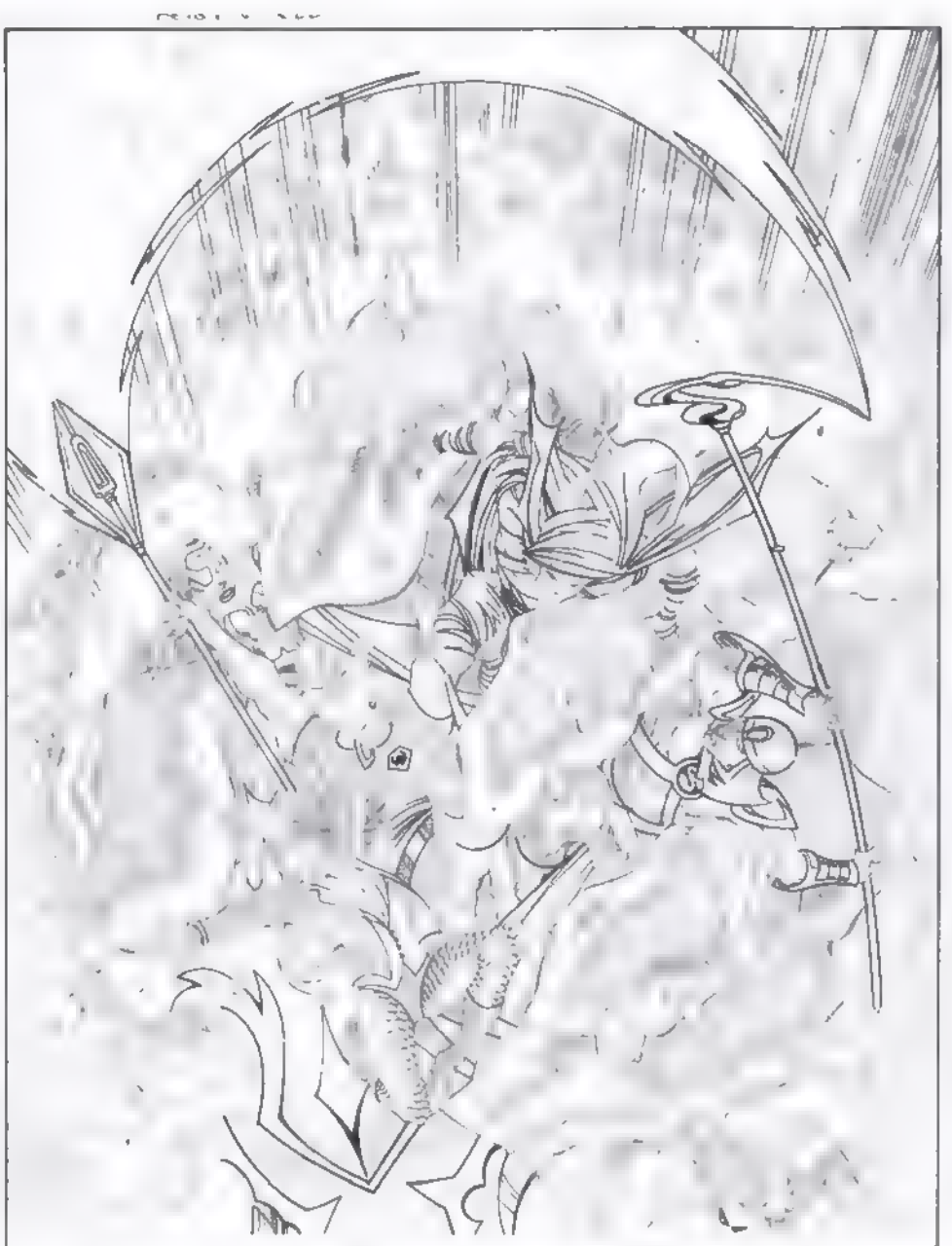
by Walden Wong

Walden Wong here and I'm going to explain how I ink a page. Some of the more recent work I've done in the past includes: *Hulk, Salvation Run, Day of Vengeance, The Spirit*, as well as *Superman Red Son*. To learn more about me, you can visit my website ***www.waldenwong.com***

Onward to the inking. Usually when I ink, I will use whatever tools that will create the right look whether it takes brushes, quills, pens, anything. As an inker, it's always good to be able to use any and all tools out there and not be limited to just a brush or just a quill. The more you ink, the better you'll get at it and the more you'll understand your tools. Knowing which tool can create a certain effect and which tool can be more efficient will always make your inks look good. By no means do I ink everything the exact same way as explained here. Every page varies and is inked differently. With that said, here's a cover for *Reign in Hell* issue 7 I inked for DC.



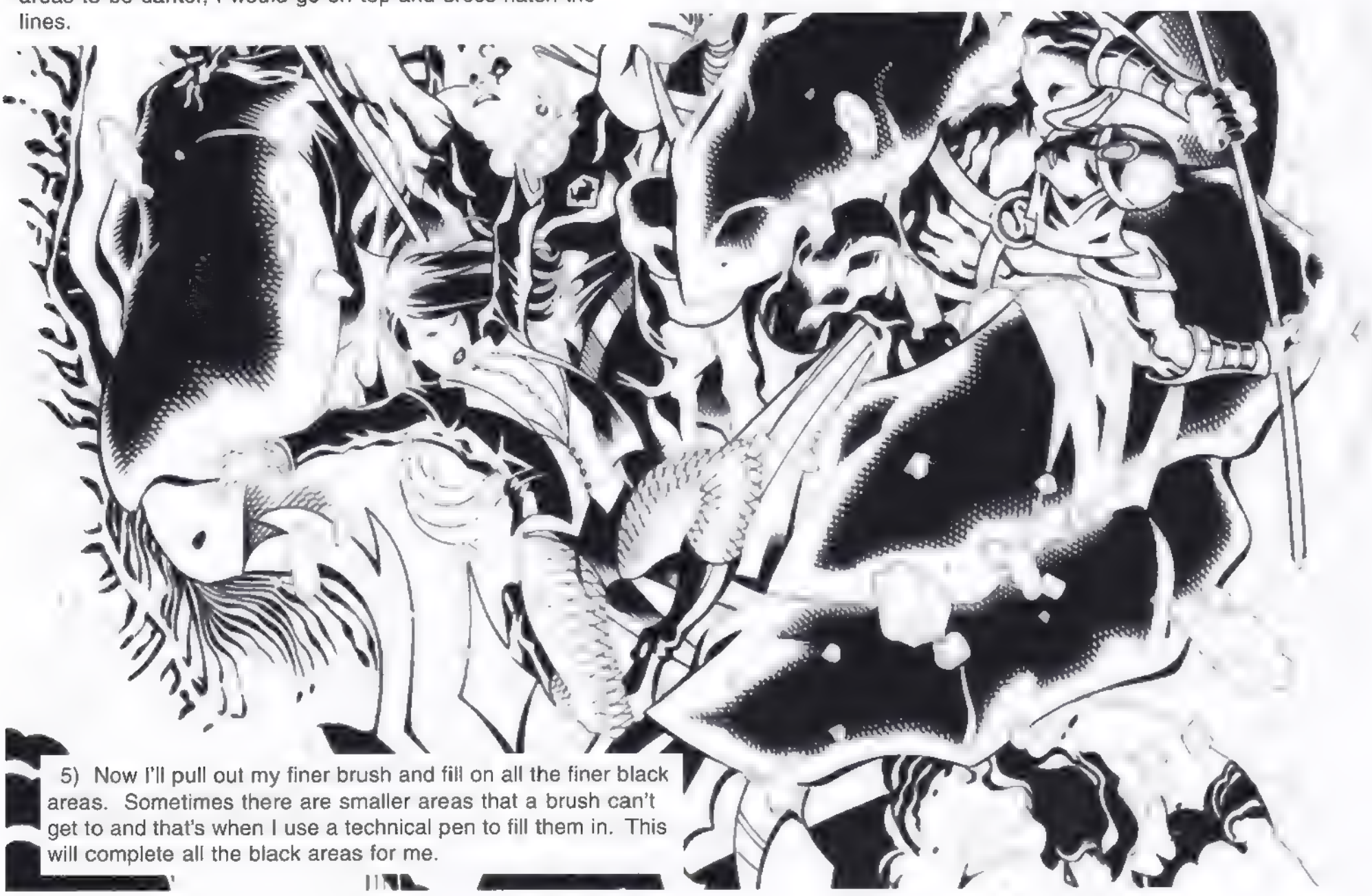
1) Here are the pencils. Before I start inking a page, I will look at the pencils and study them. At the same time, I'll think about what I can do with textures and rendering. Usually, I can see how the page will look inked before I start inking it.



2) Here's where I ink in all the lines that I think require a stencil. For this cover, I used technical pens.
Sometimes, I use a micron pen or just a regular ink pen for this depending on whose pencils I am inking. Whichever tool gives it the best look is the one I'll use.

3) In this image, I render all the areas that require tapered lines. Tapered lines are essentially hatch lines that get thicker toward the base where it touches the black area. This is usually done to create a grey area from white to black. For this page, I used a brush. Again, depending on who I'm inking, I could use a quill or a micron pen. When I need the grey areas to be darker, I would go on top and cross-hatch the lines.

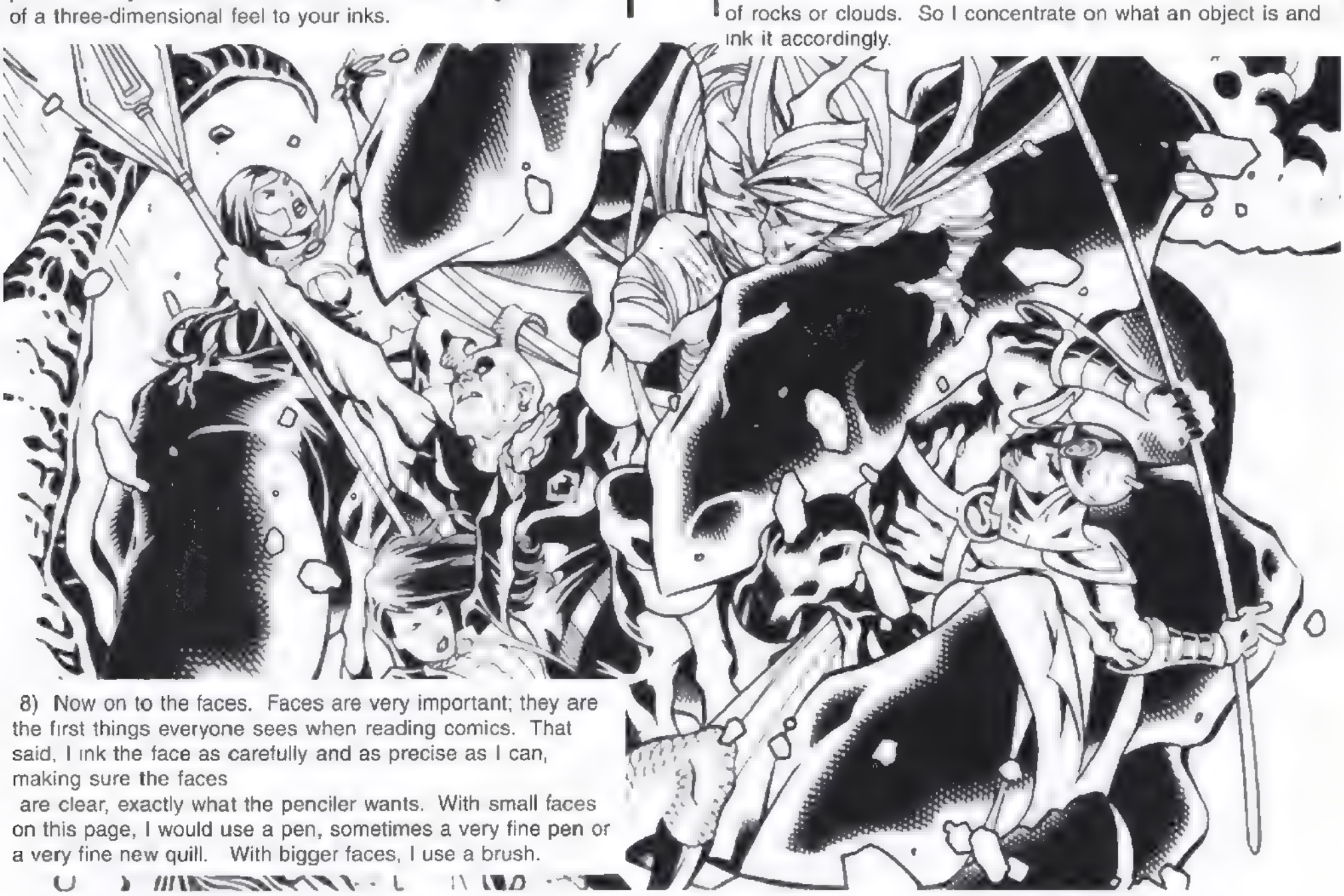
4) After all the tapered rendering, I go in there with a big thick brush and fill in all the blacks, making sure I don't go over the lines so I avoid going near the edges of the blacks. Sometimes I fill in the blacks last, but in this case, I filled it in first. Again, it really depends on the page I'm inking.



5) Now I'll pull out my finer brush and fill on all the finer black areas. Sometimes there are smaller areas that a brush can't get to and that's when I use a technical pen to fill them in. This will complete all the black areas for me.

6) After all the blacks are filled out, I start inking the holding lines (or outlines) of each character, giving them the right thin and thick to make each character pop out and stand alone. It's always good to go really thick as well as very thin to the point where you don't even see a line there. That gives it more of a three-dimensional feel to your inks.

7) After the characters are done, I ink the holding lines around every object that's on the page. This includes the clouds and every little bit of rubble, making sure textures are in the right places. For example, you won't ink the holding lines of a character the same way you would ink holding lines of rocks or clouds. So I concentrate on what an object is and ink it accordingly.



8) Now on to the faces. Faces are very important; they are the first things everyone sees when reading comics. That said, I ink the face as carefully and as precise as I can, making sure the faces
are clear, exactly what the penciler wants. With small faces on this page, I would use a pen, sometimes a very fine pen or a very fine new quill. With bigger faces, I use a brush.

9) In this image, I ink in the rest of the character's body. I'll use whatever tools that are necessary to create the right look, keeping in mind how thick and thin each line should be.

10) Here, I ink in everything else on the page to have a fully-inked page. Again, I'm keeping in mind all the different textures that are needed.

11) After everything is inked and dried, I erase the whole page and clean it up so any pencil smudges that might be on the page are erased. Sometimes, this will cause my inks to turn grey. And this happens depending on what type of boards are used. Some boards keep the black ink on well while others may turn grey after erasing.

After erasing the pages, I go in and re-spot the blacks to give it a nice dark black feel. It isn't really necessary to do this, but I enjoy it because it feels more complete for me. When the inks are dried, I go in there with white ink for more effect. On this cover, I added white to some of the rocks flying around.

After that, it's all done and ready to go.

12) Finally, here's how it looks for production. Crisp and clean.

-Walden
www.waldenwong.com

SkyStorm SAGA

The Adventures of the SkyStorm Heroes and the Villianous Rogues searching for the power of the Time Shards!

Read Online @ SkyStormStudio.com

Robert W. Hickey, Bill Nichols, Renae Deliz, Richard Pollard,
Willie Peppers, Chris Dreier, Aero Zero

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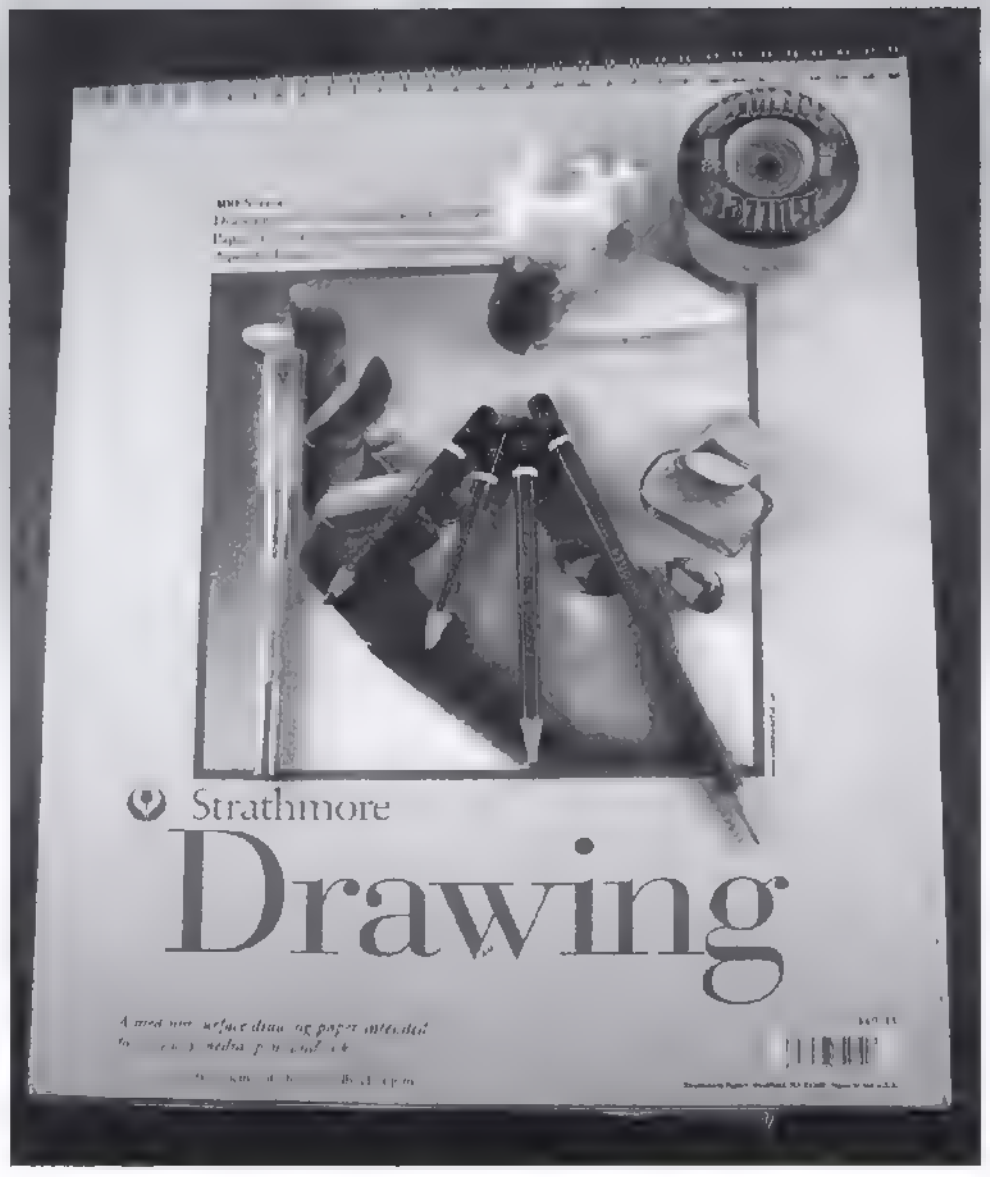
Crazy Katelyn Illustration
by Andrew Gettler



Katelyn is Crazy, insanely crazy. Yet, how did she become so crazy? Below is the method I used in creation of this piece.

Tools list:
STAEDTLER Mars Lumograph Pencils – 4H, HB, 4B, 5B
STAEDTLER Mars Plastic eraser
Strathmore Drawing Pad (300 series – 70lb, 11"x14")
Bullet skate wheel pencil sharpener
Exacto Knife
Tissue paper

One aspect of drawing that I have always had difficulty with is slowing down. I typically draw fast and because of this I tended to make silly mistakes. Lately though, over a decade after the wise advice of my high school art teacher I have started to slow down the pencil. I have also revisited the basic lessons of drawing and have been finding a higher level to my work than ever before.

The first step with Katelyn was to create a contour of her. I created my drawing space by blocking out my work area with a ruler and using 4H. Within this area I outlined the figure. After the rough was completed I stepped back to check positioning and proportions of the facial features. I used to ignore the review step; however I have found it more beneficial to maintain quality here which defines the base of the drawing. It is important to create your final base or foundation before you start rendering. Remember one thing; this is art, so these lines are just guides to help keep you on track. They are not carved in stone, and even then I am sure there is leeway.

Next I started to render out the main focal point. I started with the face first because I wanted to spend the most time here and I knew the other pieces build off of the face. Here I defined the lips and eyes, eyes being the direct focal point and the lips being the balance. You may notice that from the contour to here I changed the direction the eyes are facing. Normally a creepy image has the main character looking at the viewer, looking at the viewer to create a connection. I decided by giving the sense of looking over the viewers' shoulder it increases the creepy feel. Using the 4B I created strong shadows across the face and darkened the lips and eyes. I used the eraser on the dull edge with light strokes to clear unwanted areas and create highlights. The tissue allowed me to blend the pencil in creating a gradient across the skin. After blending with the tissue I would erase my highlight areas again. This is continued to create depth and layer.

Every person found insane wears a straight-jacket. In the next step I began creation of the dynamic jacket Katelyn wears. I used strong contour lines to create an enclosure to the area. Deep rich shadows and again I used the eraser after blending with the tissue to add emphasis on the highlights. This area is able to be a bit looser than the face because of only its supporting role. This technique was done with the second arm as well, being outstretched

underneath the chin and creating a strong diagonal across the page. It was important to create long pulled wrinkles in the top as well as maintain proper light direction. I left the contour of this arm lighter because of the additions that will be added around the arm later. After the arms were completed I shaded out the legs with deep rich shadows and soft highlights.

One of the most difficult aspects to a drawing is hair. I made sure to take my time on her hair and I am extremely happy with the final outcome. Using the 4B I made hard shadows down the top of the head and several darker shadows around the head for hair directions. I blended this down with the tissue to create a dark to light gradient. I used the exacto knife to cut part of the eraser to create a sharp edge to use in creating streaks across the shading. These streaks are the base positioning and direction of hair-fall. Only a few areas that had form in the hair were created. After several strokes, it looked as if I had nearly erased all of the shade. I took the pencil again and started stroking single outlines along some of the edges of eraser marks. Certain areas around the eyes I paid close attention to keep softer without outlines to the highlights.

Continuing with the hair I rolled a tissue into a tight pencil to shading in the darker areas as well as filling in between areas. I used the eraser and this time I created other directional marks that allowed the layers to be seen from underneath and on top. It is important to remember that when using an edged eraser in this manner, light pressure is your best friend. In this piece the hair appears slightly disheveled. It is a process of going back into the hair and filling in specific areas between the eraser marks to blend again. Once I was happy with the layering of the light/dark hair I created a very strong edge on my eraser to gain a very thin line for the finer hairs found throughout the head. I also defined the shadows on the face around the hair and on the jaw/cheek area. Hair is about the layering. Patience will win over for this step.

I created the fencing area that follows down her arm and up the page. This really rough shaped used strong contour lines with dark shading and tissue/eraser to highlight. I also used the 5B for creating stronger dark areas at the bottom of the fence as well as pulling out darker shadows from within the hair and around the face and arm.

Lastly, I used a piece of typing paper as my blender and created the background shading. This textured look was created because of the actual texture with the drawing paper and the smoothness of the typing paper. Blending with the tissue created a smoother blend because the softness of the tissue allowed for the graphite to work into the paper more; the smoother paper did not fill in the gaps which created texture. At this point I took a step back. Walked away for a few hours before coming back to finalize any touchups or other details that needed attention. This allowed time for my eyes to rest and return with a fresh look.

I hope you enjoyed reading the progression of Crazy Katelyn. Remember this is only how I created this drawing. You may have other tools and tricks you enjoy using. But I hope you can come away from this with at least one new trick. Thank you for reading.

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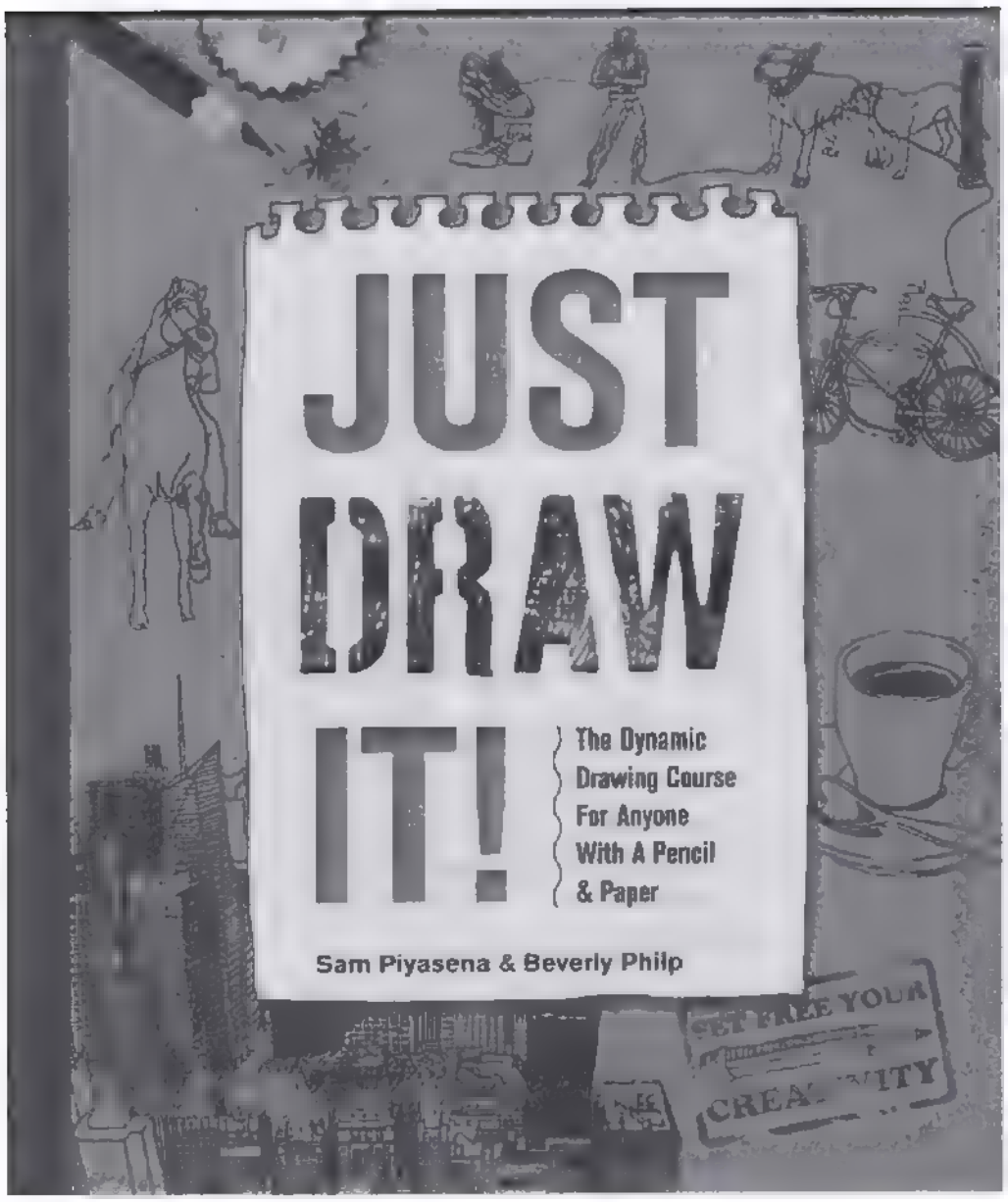

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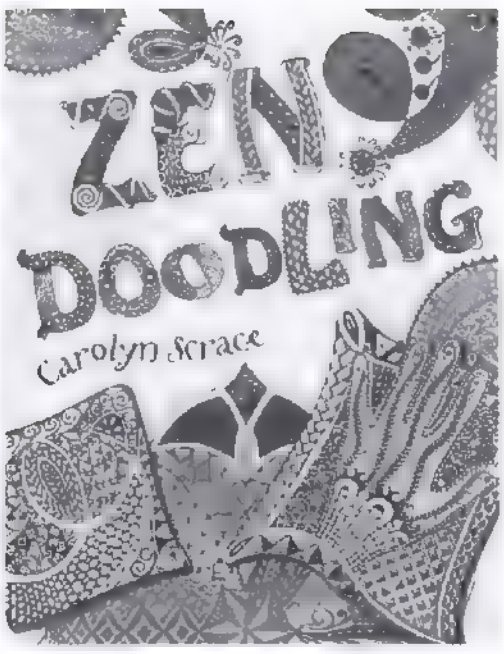

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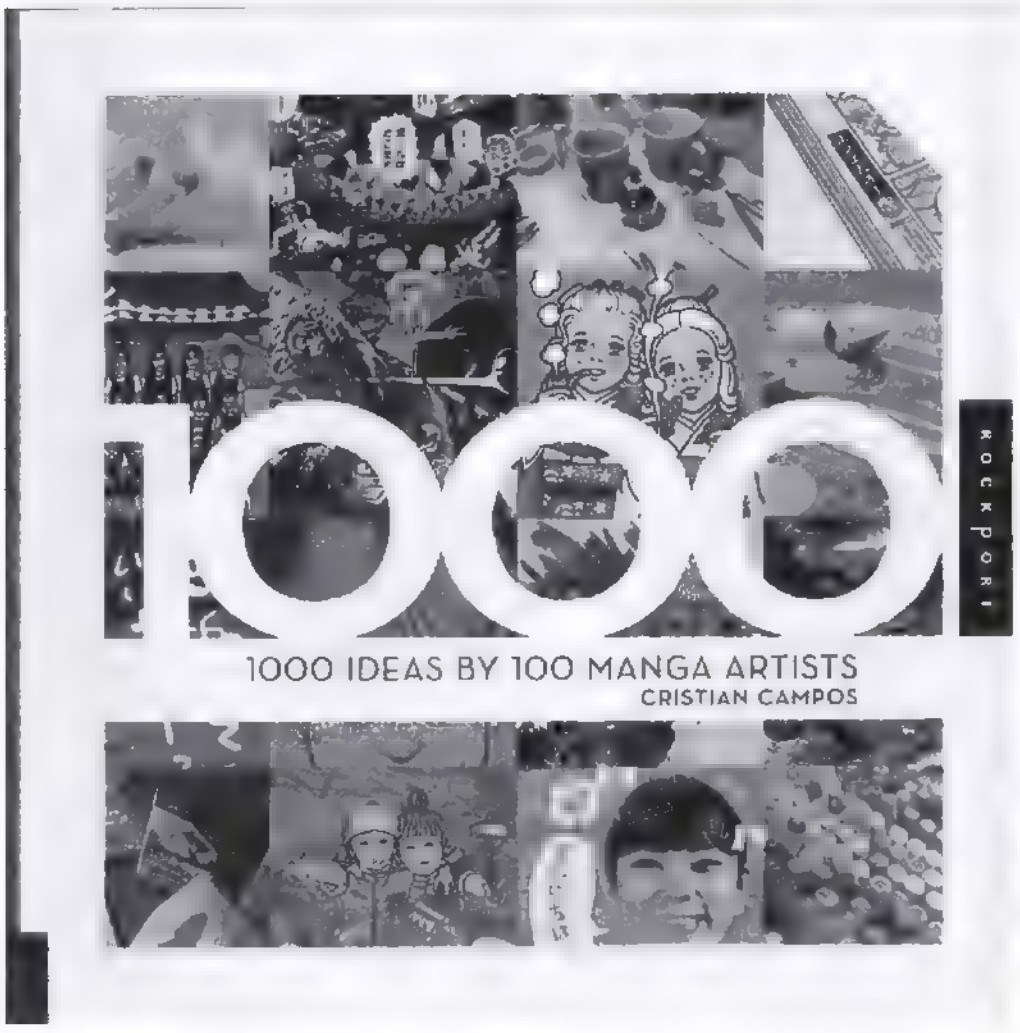

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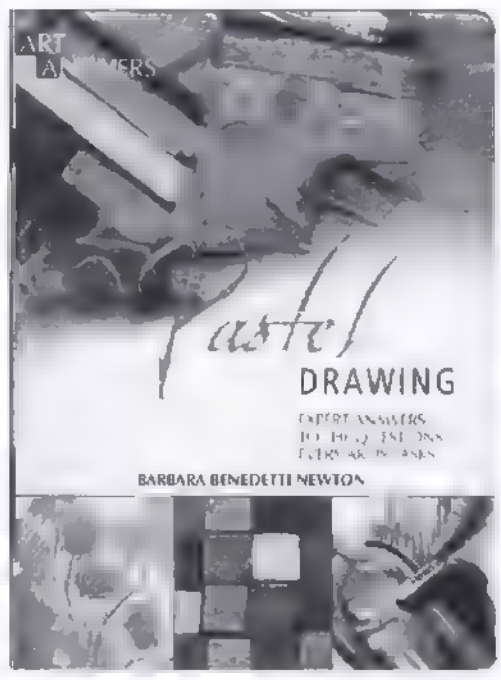

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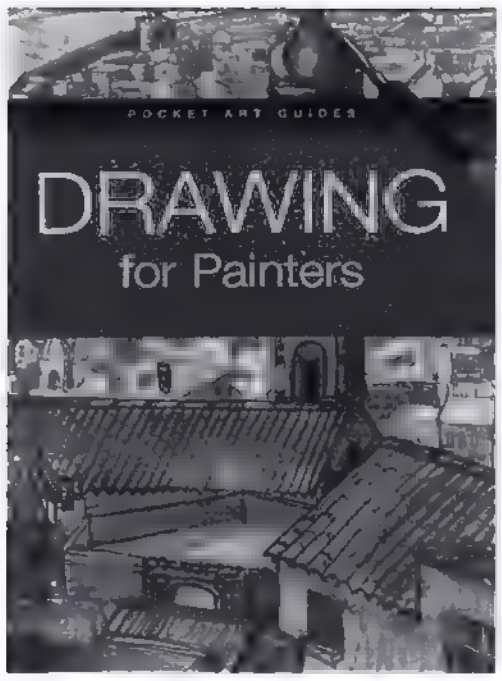

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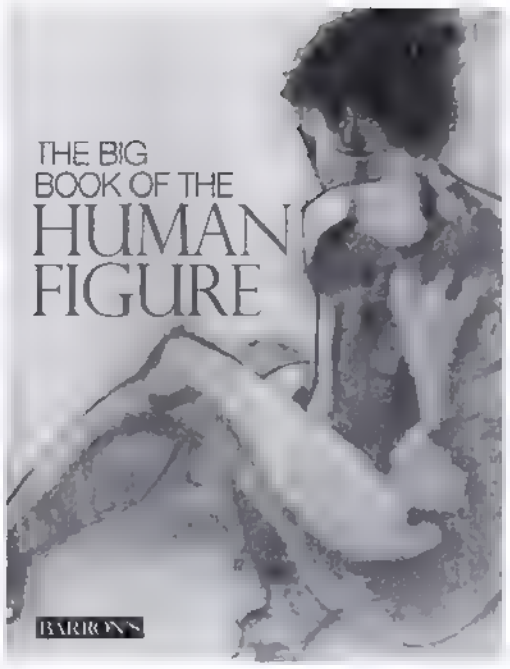

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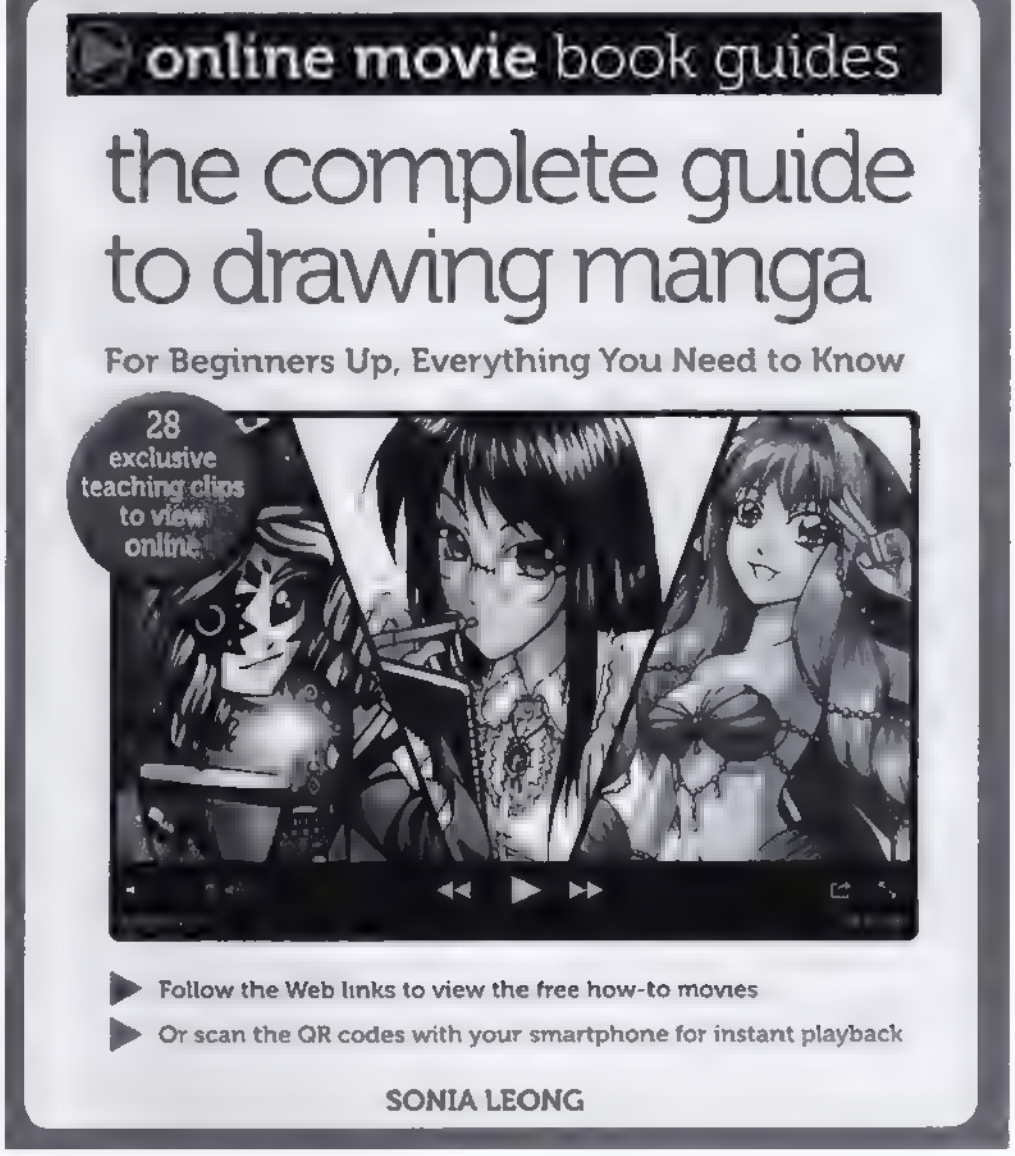

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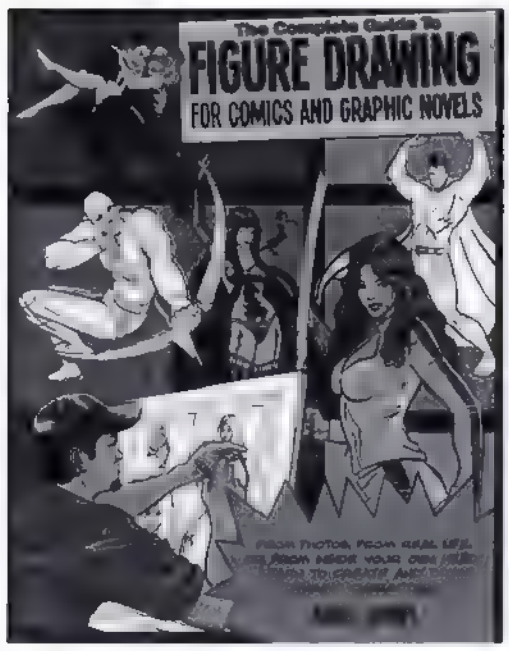

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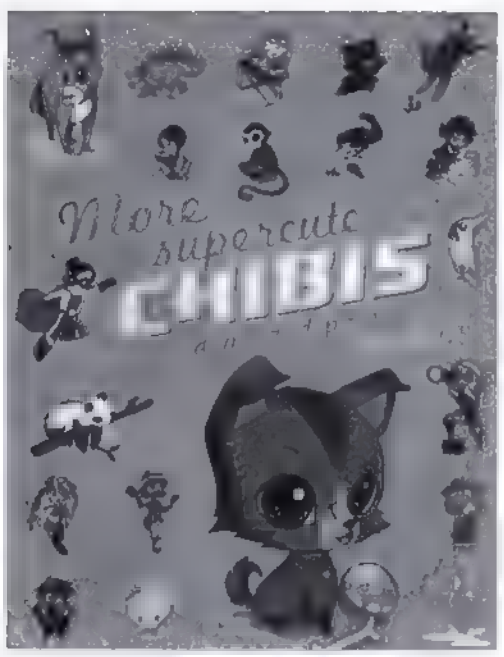

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Sketch Magazine Contest Recap

We like to do contests around here; they're a chance for the participants to show off their talent and creativity. For some, it's another excuse to draw. I can respect that.
When the entries are submitted, I round up votes from as many of my comics industry pals as I can get to send me a first, second and third place vote. And many times, we've been fortunate to get some comments, constructive criticisms. It's a chance to draw and get feedback.
Here are some of the latest contests:

Sgt. Rock Coloring Contest
Dan Fraga was gracious enough to provide a piece of Sgt. Rock artwork to be colored.
The winner was **Tim Tilley.**

The Contest: Draw your favorite supervillain doing something heroic.
The winner was **Fred Lang**.

Sketch Magazine Contest Recap

Get Him to the Greek
Draw Your Favorite Rock Star in Concert. The winner was **Ingrid Hardy** for her rendition of Muse.

Blood and Roses vs. The Minotaur
Using the SkyStorm Studios characters of Christiana Blood and Tamara Rose, the challenge: to pencil a print utilizing the elements of the two characters facing off against a Minotaur. The winner was **James Bujauskas**

Illustrating
Lady Death

by Meghan Hetrick

Layout

I initially drew up three separate layouts in Adobe Photoshop CS6, with a Wacom Intuos 2 tablet (yes, I know, it's ancient). This was the selected image, with a couple tweaks necessary such as "no smile", and if possible, to have the skulls "screaming in agony." I get the drift, so I don't modify the digital layout.

The piece is supposed to be 11x17, but my preferred watercolor stock is only 12x16, resulting in a slightly disproportionate piece. I resize the layout to 10x15, print it out, and lay both it and the stock on my lightboard for transfer. As for the excess area? No biggie, I'll just trim it off.

Pencils

Believe it or not, this is what I consider finished pencils, if I'm the one that'll be doing the inking. I tend to keep everything very loose, to keep some of the energy of the sketch captured. As you can see, I'm already tweaking the image at this point, by moving the moon up a bit and changing the draping of the cape.

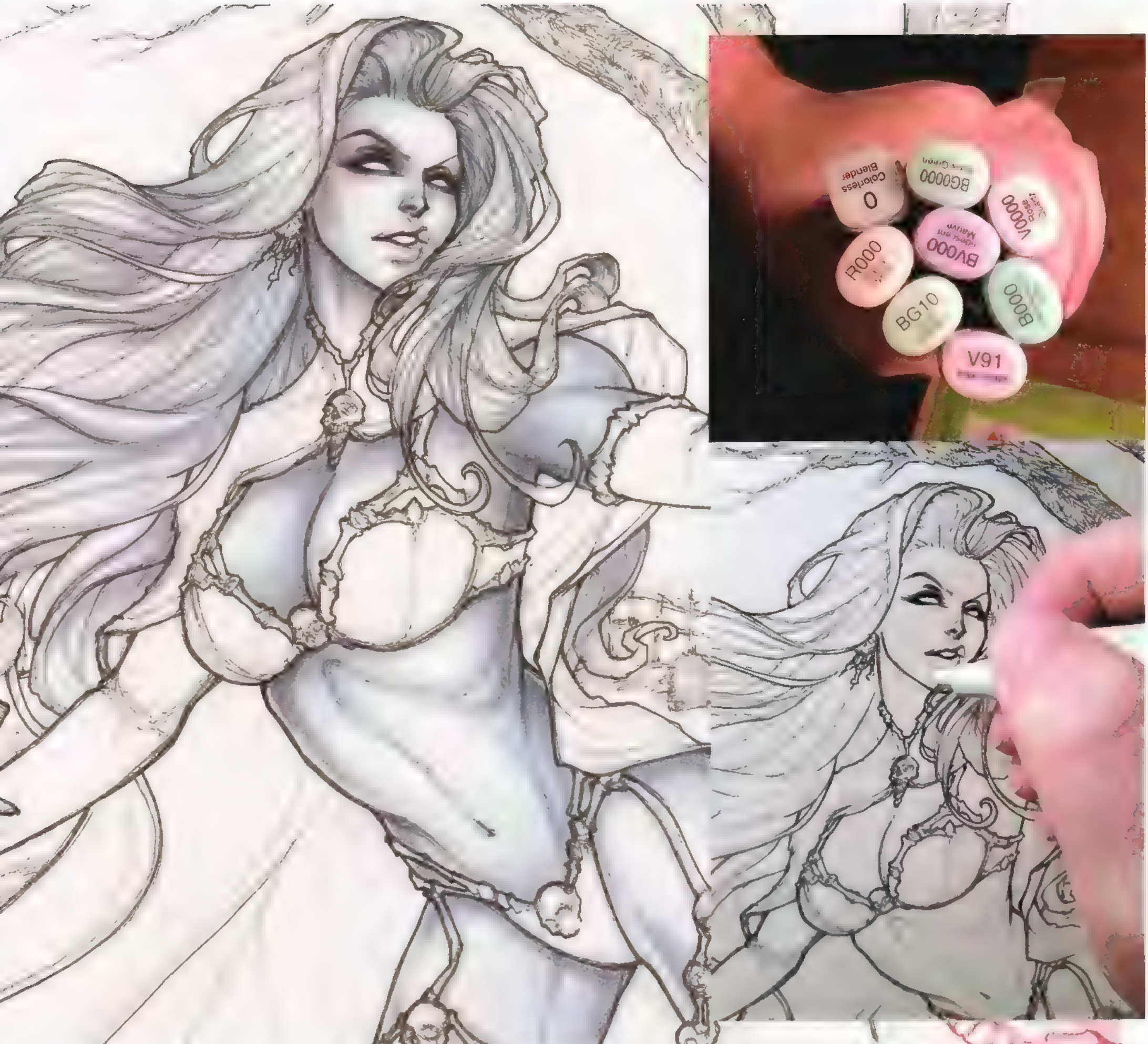
After I'm happy with the pencils.... I erase them with a kneaded eraser. Now, I'm sure this isn't the proper method of doing this, and there's some better way to get around, but it's what works for me. The lines that are left are the "important" ones, and I'm basically drawing the piece over in ink. Notice that I completely forgot about the request to eliminate her smile. I realize that and fix it before the next step. Inks

Inks

Using a Copic .03 to .05 multiliner, I do the line holds on the piece. At this point, I'm not worried about the weight of the inking; I'm just making sure that I don't lose something. I also changed her face a bit at this stage.

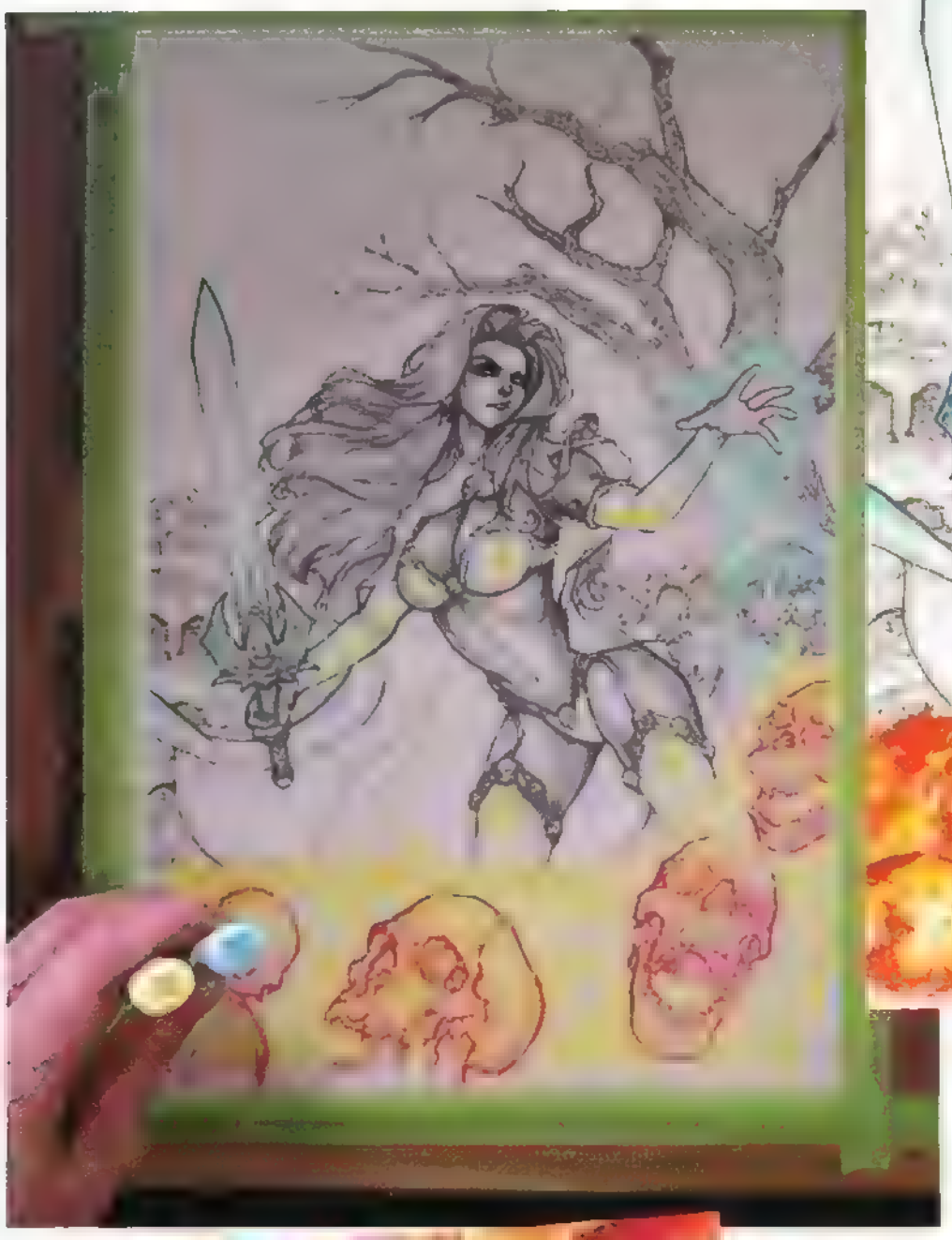
This is when the fun starts, and the inking really begins to pop. I ditch the microscopic liners for the .1 and .3 nibs and start working on the lines I want emphasized. I have no real method for explaining which ones I choose, it really is a matter of preference and just practice in general.

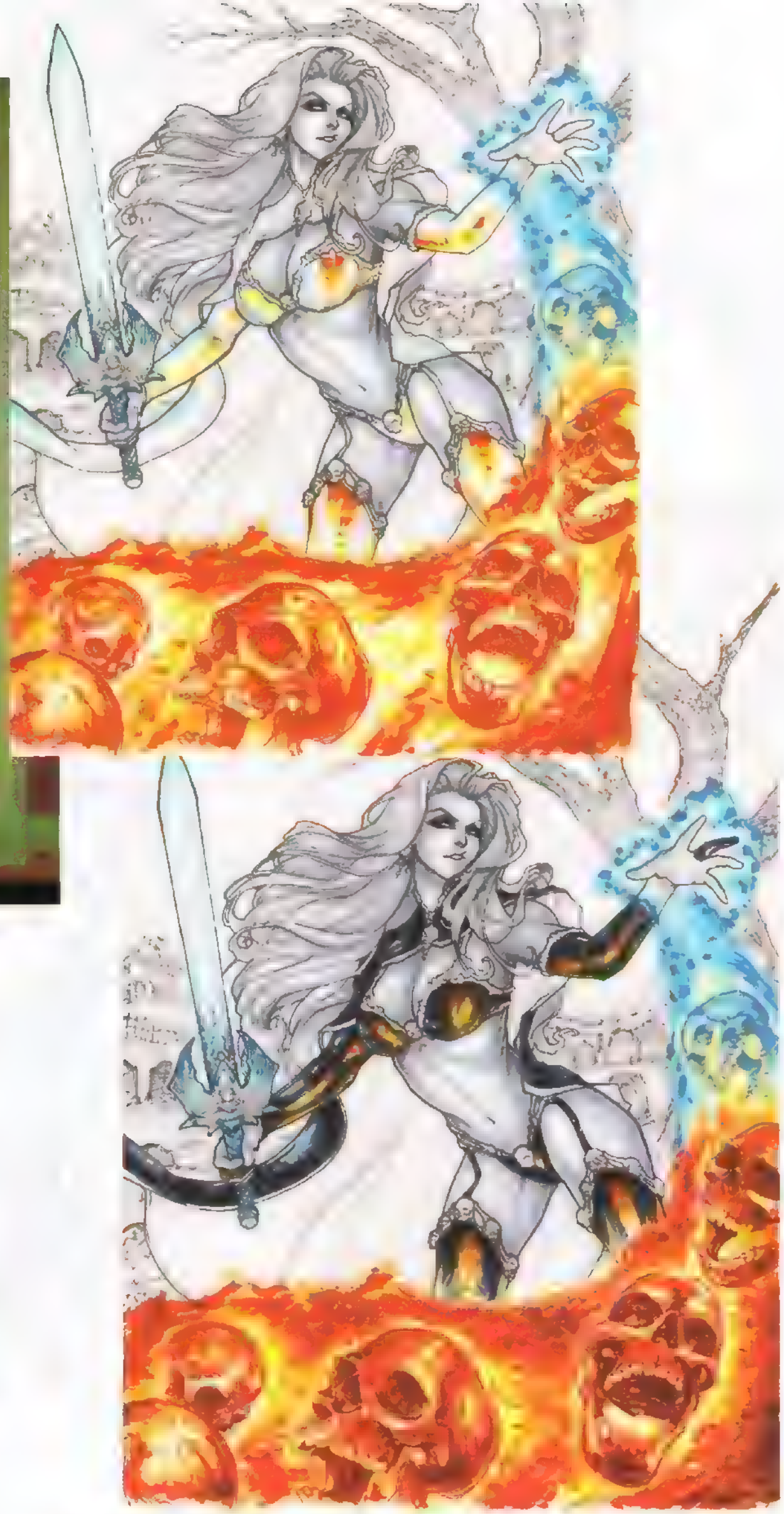
The finished inks for the piece. The background was done in the same manner as the figure, thin lines for the "filling" and bold lines for select emphasis. The skulls were inked in red and grey liners, because since this piece will be colored traditionally, the black lines would look too harsh for the energy effects.



Colors

- Now I begin to divulge all my little secrets. There's a reason I chose to do this piece on the watercolor stock instead of Bristol as is the norm. That reason is because marker, especially Copics, can be made to look like a very rich vibrant watercolor on this stuff. Just a warning though, I do NOT recommend this technique if you don't have a wide range of colors or refills, as the stock will suck your markers dry very, very quickly.
- First up is the skin. Because she is so pale, I want to use very subtle, desiderated tones, that blend almost seamlessly into one another. The secret weapon to get this effect is a heavy, as in sopping wet, layer of the colorless blender, which when combined with the marker, creates a nice wet on wet effect. However, keep in mind that this is still alcohol, so it dries quickly. You need to work faster than it can evaporate, as applying the blender after color can create all sorts of problems you don't want.
- I'm notorious for using at least a dozen shades for any particular area. These colors were used in just the first layer of color; I also ended up emphasizing shadows with a number of the desaturated blue-violet (BV20-25) tones.
- The final colors for the skin and hair.



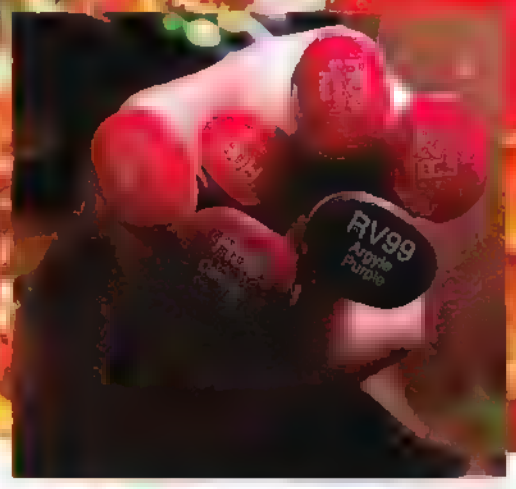


Markers 2

- The first step is blocking in the flame and blue energy lighting effects. I basically just start tossing the lightest shades I know I'll be using in the areas where I want the effects to be prominent.
- Here I've started to refine the effects, specifically the fire. Honestly, at this point you can just be a bit messy if you'd like. Once you get everything mostly blocked in, take a light-mid tone of each color, and work over the areas you'd like to be blended better. Because it's on the watercolor stock, it creates a very nice gradient effect.

Markers 3

- Time to work on the leather. I loathe using blacks and greys for much of anything, especially on a piece that's meant to be so vibrant. Therefore, all her leather bits were colored using the BV20-BV29 range, which gives it a nice blue-black look.



Markers 4

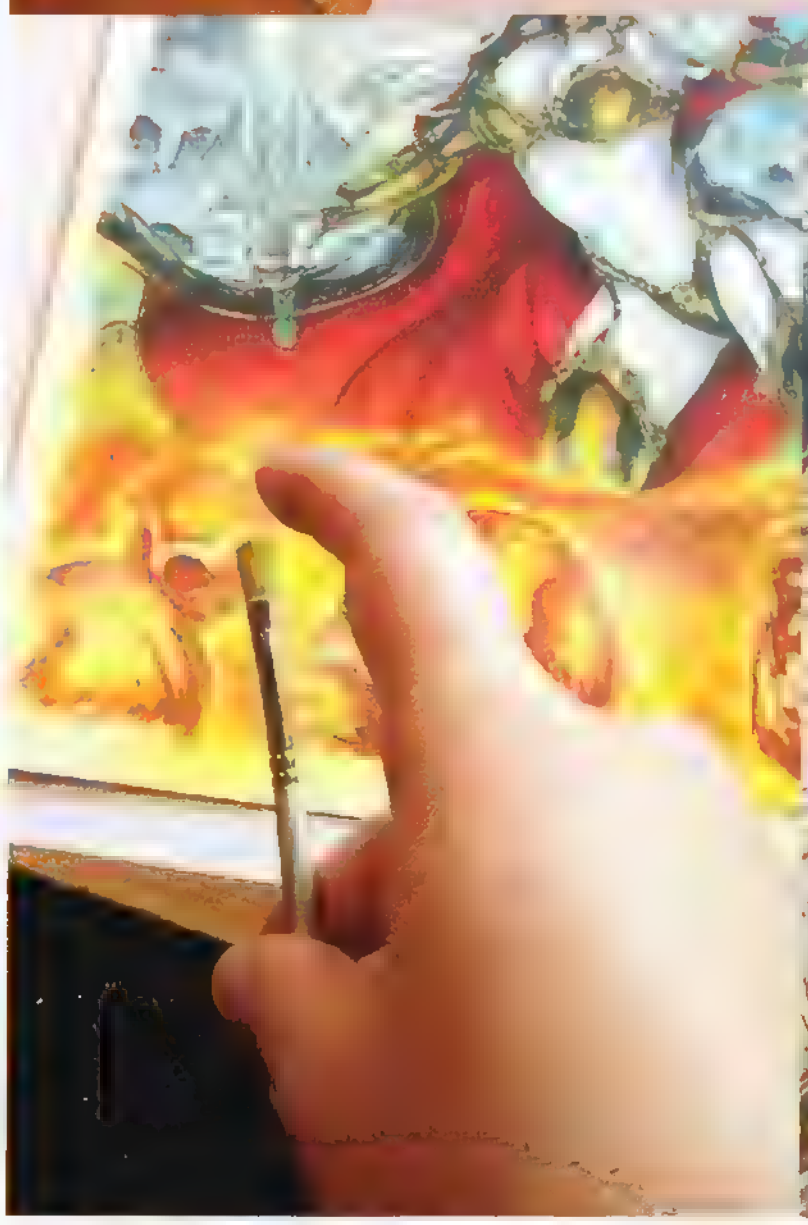
- I always save the vibrant reds for last, as they have a tendency to bleed and smear quite badly.
- For her cape, I put down a full layer of R05, and while it's still wet, I apply the subtle blending shades. I generally wait for those to dry a bit before adding the harsher, darker shadows.

Markers 5

-I start the background by laying down a very sketchy layer of B45, Smoky Blue. I'm not too concerned about the lines, as I'll eventually be loading the sky up with clouds.

-From there, I use a wide range of blue, purples, whatever I think might work best to achieve an eerie night sky. It helps at this point if you have a reference photo, but if not, just remember that you can take a lighter color and soften some of the darker tones with it.

- For the tree, I use some of the same shades that I used on the sky, to further the night effect. The fog was created with a mixture of very light, desaturated blues and blue greens.



Paints 1

-Once the markers are finished, I move on to the final portion of the piece which involves a wee bit of airbrushing and painting. I have a slight obsession with the "bloom" effects found commonly in video games and digital artwork, and like to get that in my art at times, especially with pieces that have fire and lighting effects. It also screws with people's heads, as then they can't easily figure out if a piece is digital or not. Hey, I have to have fun sometimes, right?

- If you don't have need of doing this on a regular basis, by all means this effect can be created completely digitally. However, since I'll be selling the original piece, I wanted to use as few digital effects as possible.

-Using a very viscous white gouache and a vibrant yellow acrylic, I use an airbrush to create the glowing effects. It also helps to soften out some of the harsher blends.

Paints 2

-Time for the final painted details for the original artwork. Using the same paints I used with the airbrush, I spatter yellow and white to create the ember effects, as well as add some texture to the piece. I personally prefer to use a coarse, natural brush with a lot of spring to it to do the spatters. I know a lot of folks like the toothbrush method, but I like having a bit more control, even if you do get messier in the process.

-Finally, using the white gouache and a thin brush, I apply all the remaining highlights. It's my firm belief that these highlights are what really bring a piece to life. Also, what's nice about using the gouache is that you have a bit of a reprieve if you find you don't like how it looks. It's essentially opaque watercolor, so with a bit of scrubbing you can usually remove it quite effectively from an area.

Final

- For the final step, I scan the piece into Photoshop. From there, I do my color corrections. I also add just a bit more of the glow effect using a separate layer set to “screen”. Collapse everything, crop it down, and voila! You have a print-ready piece!

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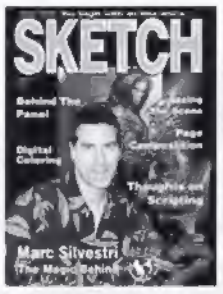

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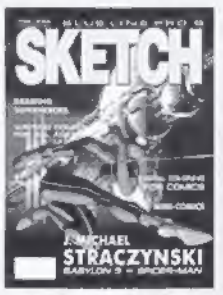

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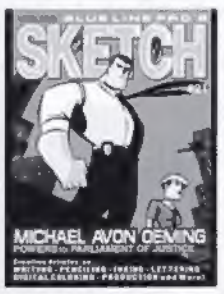

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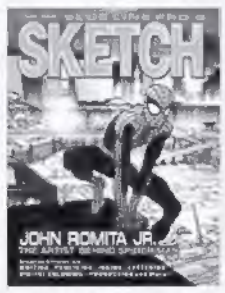

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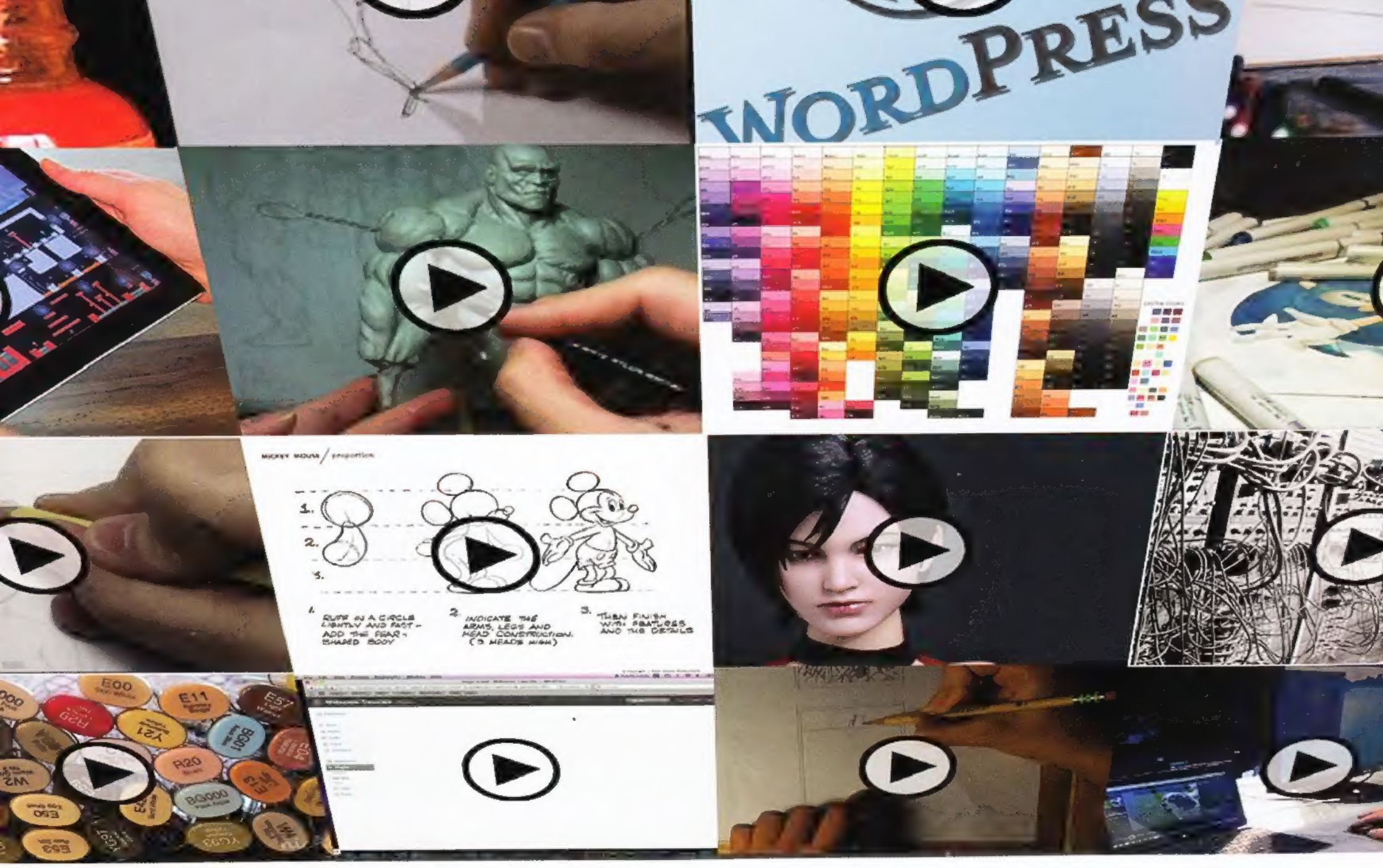

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